

A
FLAGON
OF
SONG.



E. J. RUPERT ATKINSON



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A FLAGON OF SONG



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BY

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Author of "A Nocturne," "By a Midnight Sea"
"Wayside Poems," "A Modern Magdalene."



EDWARD A. VIDLER
THE OLDERFLEET, COLLINS STREET WEST
MELBOURNE

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PROEM I.

IF I should gather up my waste-worn hours,
Dead blooms of passion heaped about my feet,
And breathe again their mellow fragrance sweet
And drowsy with the love wan time endowers;

If all the squandered wealth of time were mine
Years of ambition mute, the refuse stale
Flung into chaos potent to exhale
Hopes, weak and shameful, still to me divine;

If all the winds of wedded heaven and hell
Bore up my soul to search the dizziest height;
If every memory of far delight
Flooded desire upon one boundless swell;

While still I hold omnipotence and seem
One with all time, what shall mine anguish be
When dark derisive deeps in agony
Awake me to the horror of a dream!

PROEM II.

CONTEMPTUOUS of universes, I
Survey all space devoid of fear or trust.
With will defiant fearful to defy,
Awed by the vastness of a speck of dust. . . .

Yea, suns and planets multitudinous
Speed hurtling on—at pause for us they stay
Unmeaning, mute forever, glamorous,
Lost in the brilliance of the dazzling day.

Thus by a hand-thrust all is gone, the wide
Long vast expanse of glory struck from sight,
And at a tremor of your will subside
The sparkling deeps illumined by the night.

Blue in the beauty of the blinding sky
All space is silent, lost, save where the breeze
Breaks through the straggling branches, bent awry,
Winged from the dead deep with your memories.

And through your brain the throb of living blood
—Each beat one ripple of one moving tide—
Stirs love or care or laughter on this flood
Whereon you move; and so all men abide.

Contemtuuous of universes, I
Survey all space devoid of fear or trust,
With will defiant fearful to defy,
Awed by the vastness of a speck of dust.

THE FLIGHT OF PUCK.

THROUGH bright glistening dew, light-listening
To the stir of flowering meads,
Singing shyly, winging slyly,
Ever on he gladly speeds
Open fairy realms and under
Open skies of joyous wonder,
Plucking buds and boughs asunder,
Green among green water-reeds.

By stark-streaming skies, dark-gleaming,
Where the warm night sinks aswoon,
Lying grayly—flying gaily,
Summer petals softly strewn
Tell his song till hours grow fonder;
On he goes, and strange dreams wander
In his wake till, burning yonder,
Red, the sun outshines the moon.

Through bright glistening dew, light-listening,
Still he strays mid deep woods dim;
Half in weeping, laughing, leaping,
Mocking Sorrow at his whim,
Beckoning Beauty—Hope knows whither!
Youth and Pleasure, coming hither,
Hear his call, and, hastening thither,
Laugh their joy in seeking him!

EVENSONG.

WHAT dream in what strange land
Shall waken me to-night? What sweet
Lips burn for mine? What arms entwine
My neck, my knees, my feet—
Beneath white columns graven,
Above an azure haven;
Within vast castles paven
With the gold of Fairyland?
Where captive damsels hear my fleet
Steps rescuing them—their lips I meet.
O, life is grand! O, night is sweet
In that voluptuous land!

Prone from a dizzy shore,
Calm oceans, cool with wind and wave,
Oblivious reach past isle and beach,
Glad from my very grave—
From rose-wrought roof and rafter
Falls merrily back our laughter;
I hear the echoes after
More sweetly moan. This shore
As with hushed ages I hear rave
Around me. Foam and crooning cave
Sound more and more; sound in each wave,
Alone on that lone shore.

Through tribute realms I go,
And all life echoes my desire.
A pagan shrine with skins of wine
Drips, and our souls afire
Strike through the clouds. And over
Lanes lush with corn and clover
We stray, she and her lover,
The glad earth all aglow
Beneath the gentle sky—through mire,
Through glade and hall, by peak and pyre;
And ever so; since all desire
I never can forego.

Our dreams outshine the world.
Far swathed beyond, long-visioned seas
Are empty, or from sky to shore
With great ships flash. Dark trees
Stir as with winds narcotic
From craggy vales chaotic,
For sea and land exotic
Abjure our common world.
I watch the glamorous centuries,
Which shape men's mimic pageantries,
In mist upcurled by these mute seas,
In this most magic world.

What dream shall be to-night—
Pent darkly now—that shall awake
My pregnant, deep, abysmal sleep
By forest, hill, and lake!

Down ways and streets nocturnal,
By autumn fields and vernal;
Through lands fair and infernal—
 Mine through the magic night!—
Mine till pale dawn clouds, flake by flake,
Gleam, glow, redden, burst, and break.
The moon shines white. What dream shall wake
 Me in what world to-night?

BEFORE THE ALTARS.

HE answered: Though prayers dark 'mid
smothering clouds
Beseech my mercy, hearken how I strain
Against you know not what, whose dreaded shrouds
Benumb you now; you know not what is vain.

He said: But give Me time to answer you
With words that you may fathom where you crouch
Low at Mine altar humble, while you sue
For pity—warmed as from your bridal couch.

He moaned: No pity lightens Me when down
Before Invisible Desire Immense
I waste for wisdom, eager for His frown,
Half-blinded by the blank earth's insolence.

His echoes thus I also voiced when her
Prayers hung like shackles sore about my feet.
Thy supplications, God, I watched them stir
The world with springtime, and the world was sweet.

Yea, even I, when warm her lips were mine,
Which begged my mercy, dallied, whispering
"Wait!"
And high in heaven I caught her soul divine,
Thrilled by her burning body passionate.

NIGHTMARE.

DOWN crumbling steeps I galloped fast;
Swart cliffs and gullies on each hand
Engulfed the night; dry, yellow sand,
Far-strewn with wreckage, gaped aghast.

Alone I swayed; deep in the night
Hooves beat away, and faces dark
Rose surging, menacing; and stark
Squat shapes swung backward, feigning flight.

With scarce a murmur from the sea,
Gashed, scarred, and sullen, sinuous,
Long billows foamed, and even thus
The white-fanged waves leered up at me.

Before me and around, the blind
Earth stirred; a sigh of sick despair
Sobbed, stifled, through the sluggish air;
Black horror urged me from behind.

I knew not whence I fled, nor why;
Fear paled within me, and desire
Shrank, spurting like an ebbing fire;
Hope mocked me from the pallid sky.

And whither I should flee, or whence
Had fled, I knew not. Like one grin
The grey, grimacing tide swept in;
Far tumult shook the darkness dense.

Forever strong to flee and flout,
Wild sea-rack eddied nearer yet;
My sorry limbs were sore with sweat,
My livid soul consumed by doubt.

And red scorn from aloft shone wide;
Black from the sky grey waters raped
Incestuous waves; and, terror-shaped,
My eyes surveyed the grinning tide.

Strange shudderings whimpered far and near;
My vision quailed; derisive forms
Approached, and, gibbering, giped in swarms;
They touched me, and I ceased to fear!

And ocean, earth, and sky, effete,
Were shown but witless growths of Time—
Sudden my soul burst forth sublime
With budding wisdom, violet-sweet!

But now awoken, wistfully
I envy him who watched aghast
That frantic rabble weltering past,
The scowling sky and loathsome sea;

For barely breathes an echo thence
 When that one moment thrilled with light,
 Whose memory taunts and daunts my plight,
And chokes me with my diffidence.

WASSAIL SONG.

A WORLD for laughter, this
Live earth-abyss!
Around the glad gods sit
And gloat on it,
While tottering men dare tread,
Tiptoe among the dead:
Watch how they shrink!
Toys for the high ones,
Noise for the sky-ones—
Drink!

Up from earth's edge
This cup let us pledge;
Yet in a blink
Their lives and ours are one,
Sure as the sun!
Mark out each merry god,
Jerk him a nod
Up from earth's brink!
Now to them quaffing,
Bow to them laughing—
Drink!

A world of wanton flowers
This heaven of ours,
Whence gods touch life in men,
We gods, and when

We choose they die, and so
Are puppets in their woe,
Where down they sink.
Their pain is our pleasure,
Gain for our leisure—
Drink!

Down on the earth,
Frown in your mirth;
Yet in a blink
Our lives and theirs are one:
What shall they shun?
Mark how each self-sure face
Mimics our grace,
Up from earth's brink!
Fate schools them hereafter,
Fools for our laughter—
Drink!

ANACREONTIC.

THROUGH pregnant past thousands of years,
They laboured, the gods, to mould me—
This creature that merits their jeers—
Their masterpiece! Laugh and behold me!

For, spurned from the tombs of their creeds,
Men scoff in their maddened elation,
This rabble that babbles and breeds!
And such are the best of creation.

And so what a folly it were
Not to revel in all that is human!
I'd as soon not scoff at your care—
I'd as soon keep faith with a woman!

HOMAGE TO OBERON.

WHEN black midnight owls their hooting
Cease, and whisperings ebb and fall,
Buds are shaken,
And thin shooting
Tendrils waken—
Fairies call!
Gaily crickets from far thickets
Past the moss-grown garden wall
Time the fairies' footsteps there,
Merrily dancing, one and all;
And among these branches, where
Swift they flare and flutter, swinging,
Laughing, ringing, lightly flinging
Joy upon me with their singing—
I can touch them if I dare!

Through the long midsummer night, sweet
With cool dew on flower and grass—
Look how quick
Those bats their flight beat,
Up and flick
The moon and pass!
Over mellow hayfields yellow,
Starred with poppies red and sparse,

How frail fairies chuckling there
 Watch some dainty elfin farce,
 Or hunt snails, or from their lair
Green moths scare, for gliding, sailing,
Downward trailing, upward paling,
Half the bright sky they are veiling!
 I can hear them everywhere!

ON MANLY BEACH.

IT has taken all time for that wave to swell,
 Low-ridged, from the ocean over the bay,
 While æons withered and nations fell,
 Precursors fixed for this moment's sway,
Till swift, like a frosted sword, should reach
 Waters running with foam and spray,
Loud and white to the peopled beach,
 In the sheen of the westering day.

Down, far down in the gulfs of Time,
 Crumbling centuries, heap on heap,
Rot forgotten ere world and clime
 Split the chaos of timeless sleep.
Numberless ages, in limitless space,
 Bore this day that that wave might sweep,
As forth from the worlds they create and efface,
 Back into the silence deep.

Down and down with each breath they sink,
 Grim, spectral throbbings of Time outworn,
Through depthless, visionless vaults they shrink—
 Blind forever to dusk and dawn—
Wraiths potential that huddle and cower,
 Vacant and voiceless, long forsworn,
That this wave might flash, rush forward, and shower
 Alive in its flight forlorn.

For it took all time ere that wave could burst
With all presaged of it, curve and hue:
How from that headland rocks immersed
Would blur the long glimmering green and blue,
Wan with the dusk-gray glamour of night,
Fragrant and mellow, and soft with dew;
All time lay prone for one moment's might—
Now one with the void anew.

It was not once and it is not now,
Fulfilment sudden existed and ceased;
Strong to be, though one knows not how,
One wave seethed forth from the wind-wet east;
And Time all past for this end subdued
Suns and planets, and bud and beast,
And men's joy and their laughter and passion and feud,
In the riot of battle and feast. . . .

No; nothing exists but the souls of men,
The Soul of God that has burst into spray;
From desert and mire and through forest and fen
We flickered and died, as we die each day
In our doubt and our sorrow, and life's own joy
Throbs in our blood, for we live, I say,
Who die each moment, glad to decoy
Woe for the dread of our love's decay!

We live—we can perish not; all things change—

This rock and those skies: I am still, you remain
Soul-centred, bewildered by thoughts that estrange

You from yourself. Thoughts stored in your brain,
Age-long, inherited, guard you well—

Well from that wisdom no death shall disdain,
When Time shall be silenced and heaven and hell
Lapse—lapse from our life again.

MELBOURNE SONNETS.

I.—IN COLLINS STREET.

THIS city's greatness glares—a wild obsession,
New, crude, harsh, unremembering, un-
romantic;

Some latent thing gropes here, unseen, gigantic,
With internecine commerce by confession
Main motive, puffed with lies, bluff, and aggression,
Sapped by unnumbered agents, oddly frantic,
Superfluous shopmen, clerks, and snobs most antic,
Diverse, estranged, bowed by their own oppression.

How Money glories! Truth is incidental,
And honour needless; all beside is menial.
Hear how they jabber tales of scrip and rental—
Sleek, surreptitious, blankly glum and genial,
Extolling all success. To cheat is venial,
Intrigue and riot merely sentimental.

II.—THE PAWN SHOP.

REMOTE, strange relics of romance are piled
 Inside and out, each with its tragic tale,
 Forlorn, quiescent. Listen! Through the
 pale
Past, through the silence, from far lands beguiled,
They stir, they call. The moan of some dead child;
 A drunkard's haggling curse; a woman's wail,
 That he might drink and drowse; that she might
 quail
Through one more timorous night, still undefiled.

Or there comes fluttering in some dainty dame,
 Who for one trinket snatches for one week
More than a strong man saves through many years.
Here all may come—they bring their vice and shame,
 As with their woe the floors and rafters reek;
The very air is heavy with their tears!

III.—AN ADDRESS IN REPLY.

YOU modern men, purveyors of perfection,
Whose blazoned gifts from catalogue and
hoarding

Refurbish hackneyed eulogies, recording
Your stock's worth and all rivalry's subjection—
How has the past been honoured, whose erection
Towers to your greatness, with clapped tongues
applauding

Most pompous gulls, that pilfer your marauding!
Exalted dupes, most smug in your protection !

Proud kings of traffic, what filth could you dwarf,
Who swindle, haggle, hoard, and gravely cheat,
Exhaling lies? What reptile sense have you,
Fat with the spoil of field, exchange, and wharf,
That by your stone-age cunning you subdue
Men, and infect them with your grave deceit?

IV.—ON THE KERB.

ALL'S life, and yet men doubt it, deeming it
Absorbed by one of its conditions; so
Destroyed in one breath's trifling death, as
though

The sun were drowned in every pool or pit!
Deeming, moreover, that one's soul is lit
And fashioned by his warm blood's ebb and flow,
Like blood's own warmth—which he could only
know
Because aloof, undying, infinite. . . .

All is life! Men watch the trickling years dissolve;
Earth strives to life. Life from unfeeling clay
Must prove the Cosmos sentient, the blue sky
God's garment; and men watch the dust evolve
With will for sight and hearing, and survey
Life—only life! Fools do not doubt they die!

V.—AT THE DOCKS.

DAWN, around packed buildings, flickering,
flowered;

Daylight full on sullen waters glowing,
Rippled; crawling streets stirred; ships, outgoing,
Slipped down seaward; wind and chimney showered
Smoke and coal-dust; summer burst and towered,
Pelting grit from inland deserts, blowing
Pell-mell southward, lanes and vessels showing
Blurred; beneath the sky all shrank and cowered.

Arctic shores of frozen glory, tropic
Isles uncharted, indolent, cool, sunny—
Tales for children such are. There's no topic
Left now, clever, sad, glad, strange, or funny,
But, as the voyager knows, though microscopic,
Spells the desire for woman, drink, or money.

VI.—INCIDENTAL.

WITH bleared eyes blinking, dazed, the cripple
 strayed
 Among the plunging traffic; peering
 round

Uncertain, moved and fell. One fearful sound
Caught his life bubble-like; one flash dismayed
Him struck to instant death, from sun to shade,
 Where the kerb dribbled blood; his palsied jaw
 Fell slack, his tongue lolled; and wide lids, in awe,
Scarce dared to loathe the grin his torn mouth made.

All time is the same to him now—his entire
Life perished and potential, instantly

 Flashed one with death, exempt from time and care,
Apart from chance of change, dread, or desire,
As petrified—freed from these years that flee,
 Immune from time forever, everywhere.

VII.—IN THE BANK.

OUT of the dead cathedral, where dead saints
Mark for untold contempt worn, sorry tales
Mumbled by fatted priests, whose boast be-
wails

Earth, so its part—their creed—that grey church
taints

Me with sepulchral care, till pleasure faints,
Limp under suckling grief. Away from this!

Out in the live town's turmoil, all remiss,
Is nobler than such prolix grandeur paints.

Here in this sacred place God is secure!

His golden blood hence, here, and hither drugs

Life. Ships, lands, cables, railways, roads, entice
Spoil to this great hushed temple; men immure
Their sons, all future hope here; here Death hugs,
Slimes, and devours their gluttony and vice.

VIII—THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

THROUGH the stench and smoke of pipe and
stale cigar—

Black coats, black hats, and raucous tones,
bleared eyes,

Quick, past them—hold your breath! Yet in this
guise

Here throbs the nation's heart! Iron, coal, and tar,
Goldfields, farms, foundries, and all earth at par,

Pour forth their wealth, like blood, to vitalize

These very walls, these very men, their lies,
Their houses, parks, and cities, near and far.

To-day the world's romance is centred here.

This is the nation's heart—its arteries
Flood from this spot, and turn and twist and veer.

Here sluggish prudes and leech-like rakes, at ease,
Sap the land's life with schemes effete, austere—

As sure and tardy as their own disease.

IX.—AT THE DRAPER'S.

LET Woman be his creed who would lament
This modern world of sensual luxury!
It is her world! Like waves nursed by the sea
Men rise, and rage, and vanish; but, content,
She bears her children. Her sweet wonderment,
Bewitching men forever, makes them be
For her but as a mirthful tragedy,
Though she weeps, too, and seems as diffident.

Here Her chief joy lies! Let this place be kept,
Then, sacred to Her for Whose lovely sake
Men toil and squander with one will, no less,
To gladden Her with silk and lace, all swept,
Bejewelled, close round Her thrilling you—to make
More ravishing yet Her holy nakedness!

X.—THE DECADENT.

FOR him the stale conventions, habits, all
The thoughts men bow beneath, make virtue
seem

Itself a fashion—whence rank cities teem
With millions mouldering to their graves, who crawl
Around like vermin when alive; who maul
Each other, multiplying, and one stream,
Putrescent, wallowing deathward, tells the theme
Which all their noblest virtue can recall.

He cries: "I'll glory, then, in every vice!
Sublimely drunken with men's wickedness,
Which I'll assume. My life can be the price—
My love, truth, honour, faith—all I possess.
Against myself I'll help to load the dice—
I'm the one sickly god that I'll confess."

XI.—THE AGENT.

MUTE or loquacious, as chance may require,
Shrewdly complacent, quick to equivocate,
Bluff, bully, browbeat, brag, conciliate,
Cant, sympathize, or jest—both quack and liar—
He is the creature of effete desire;
The market-gauge of bargainings which inflate
His windbag mind with words to vindicate
The acts that his scarce-witting words respire.

Mendacity is his perfection. He,
Conventionally too timid to degrade
Truth frankly, as a thief does, affably
Smirks acquiescent, never unafraid
To envy those who daunt his jealousy—
Who dare to plot, rob, pilfer, rape, and raid.

XII.—AT FLEMINGTON.

DEGRADE yourself to this with feverish drink,
Sustained by bawdy tales of urban wit;
This gay environment is surely fit.
Invidious females, decked in white and pink,
Green, blue, and scarlet, all grimacing, think,
Poor dolls! that they are happy—hag and chit.
Their mindless menfolk wager, drawl, smoke, spit,
And talk their twaddle, roar, and grin and wink.

Gubernatorial pomp's their bait, no doubt—
Spice for their savagery. Who's squared what horse
Pricks them to serious thought. The loud bands
blare
Mingling with yells of jockey, bookie, tout,
Till the rush of hooves along the matted course
Holds every gaze beneath the vernal glare.

XIII.—ON "THE BLOCK."

WHIRLED in a shimmer of muslin, satin, lace,
They chatter, laugh, and smile; their
radiance glows,

And from their loveliness a fragrance blows
Which deifies each mystic girlish face.
Here's more than magic! In every coy grimace,
A glove's half-gesture, the tilting of a nose,
There lightens something from each dainty pose,
Some startled sweetness or elusive grace.

Observe them thus in splendour—yet they walk
No less in nakedness though pads complete
Their glittering, fluttering raiment—nearer gaze
Deep through their warm, white skin; watch how they
stalk:

Stiff bones, automatons of what they eat—
Who live—and live but while their flesh decays.

XIV.—HIGH SOCIETY.

STAID sires of maids divine, they strut, rotund,
Climax of culture and peace, these fatted
magnates,

Who wallow through the towns their torpor stag-
nates;

In whom remains some virtue moribund,
Since at their heels, though with convention shunned,
They dare parade, luscious from cars and cabs,
Correct, spruce, dignified, their ornate drabs,
Superb with all their venal bulk has dunned.

Her one need is that he should prostitute her:
Why praise him? Smile with his proud wife, who,
knowing

Him and his petted bias, taking cover
In prudish crazes—suffragism would suit her—
Sweetly ingenuous ever, on her own showing—
Rejuvenates her face and bilks—her lover.

XV.—SUBCONSCIOUSNESS.

THAT she may languish in her sumptuous flat,
Ten thousand acres sweat with wool and
wheat;

That she may lunch, maids tend her jewelled feet,
While she leans back and pets a costly cat.
She sips champagne from crystal, musing at
Her whole shape glassed in carven ivory,
Bored even with her lovers, even she,
Bored with her latest twenty-guinea hat. . . .

She weeps: Her wistful loveliness could know
Not anything in all experience, sad.

To her, unknown—who is more proud than
she?—

Her great-aunt drubs, rubs, thumps and scrubs like
mad,
And scolds: "I ain't got time to cry!"—and so
Laughs pausing, and gulps down a mug of tea.

XVI.—AT THE AQUARIUM.

SHE lies raped from her bright sarcophagus,
Denuded, stripped, her tomb a thoroughfare;
Rome was not when she breathed, and she
lies there:

For thirty centuries she has lain thus.
Rome rose; Rome fell; proud nations emulous
Have been like fitful dreams blown everywhere,
Like smoke about the world, aghast, aglare;
While she lay tranquil, mute, mysterious.

And one may pass, some girl indifferent,
Who chattering pauses, half inquisitive,
Half-heedless of some strange vague sentiment
As of some far-off wistful memory;
Who cannot know she did not always live;
Who barely dreads what she shall sometime be.

XVII.—THE KEW CEMETERY.

WITH faces turned up ever to the skies
They sleep forever, crumbling year by
year

Back to the earth that bore them; but no fear
Moves them, nor joy: the dead are very wise.
They need no sorrow now, nor sad surmise
Of what life means; not in their graves, not here,
Survives one thought of theirs and not one tear;
Yet always they look upward to the skies. . . .

Within your flesh they live!—and being dead
You too shall guess not how you were defiled
By your vain horror being unbereft
Of your familiar fear: its hope, its dread;
No man may know more than a new-born child
Whose dreams are of the heaven he has left.

XVIII.—IN THE RESTAURANT.

AS many as your moods are, they exist:
As many as your flickering moments are,
So many are your vanishing selves, afar,
As many as the drifting specks of mist
That blur your thought with faint dreams that resist
Your open knowledge, multitudinous
Yourself you see yourself forever thus;
So men are slain and slay, so maids are kissed.

This crowd that chatters, feeds, and moves about,
They keep within themselves your origin;
Not one is absent from your teeming brain,
But composite within your mirth and doubt
They move you with their passion, love and sin;
You move them with your longing and your pain.

XIX.—MIDNIGHT.

THE wide streets glimmer in gray solitude.
A last belated reveller, roystering by,
Jerks out a catch, a spasm as to defy
Night, and the ambient, stolid structure, nude.
A cluster of strident harlots sink their feud,
Accost and clasp him, as playfully they ply
Him bickering; and they vanish all awry.
Dimmed by the glare, the stars are all subdued.

The meretricious city is as still
As any drunken courtesan by day.
These wearied streets of roofs and shops are all
But the excretions of men's greed. Away,
Like a far nightmare, town and suburbs sprawl,
Away—mute, aimless, inexplicable!

XX.—A COROLLARY.

THAT we may blur remembrance, we exist
By passion, dread, doubt, hatred, and
desire,

Snared to bewildering time until we tire,
Collapse, and fail; wraiths in a world of mist,
A flickering concourse, where men twinge, cringe, twist,
Strut, grope, grimace, hope, languish, and aspire;
Whose chance moods are as wine that thrills with fire
The souls of martyr, clown, and sensualist.

Unending, timeless, apathetic state,

Whence life, oblivious, drew us—death amain
Shall hurl us thither when, like sparks afresh,
We'll take the darkness. By Our will innate
All things imagined live—all joy, sense, pain,
All fulfilled life—in Our perpetual flesh.

AT BREAK OF DAY.

I DO not crave sure ease—to quaff
Clear crystal cups abrim with wine,
When lips are fain to mock and laugh
And the dull earth appears divine.

I crave not for the revelry
Of banquets or a purchased kiss;
The laboured mirth of those who flee
The thought of life, I crave not this.

For I have toiled and mourned and laughed;
The frenzy of abortive mirth
Lurked in the tingling wine I quaffed;
And she has loved, I know her worth.

The mirror of man's longing, she
Seems sweetest in the sweet desired,
Frail vapid shape of flesh; and he
Yields her the passion she inspired.

With wine my soul I surfeited—
Love, rank in folly, ne'er could win
Me to her lust and lures unwed—
Thus have I triumphed over sin. . . .

But O to see the morning sun
Burst over long green plains of grass,
To know, although the night is done,
That I am what I always was!

I shall not humble this my pride
Nor beg some god to elevate
Me from the fluctuating tide,
For I shall ride above my fate.

Nor shall I moulder in repose
As they who smile and then bemoan
Their ways, and cant of love, as those
Who slobber round some idol's throne.

But O that I might stretch above
The universe and feel and see
All that my hope has whispered of,
Though writhing with quick agony!

Let me have fortitude enough
To be reliant on the light
That shines within, however rough
The way, however thick the night.

(The blackness of the sunset hill
It could not be, did not there shine
The sun beyond—does death fulfil
Our lives to prove we are divine?)

All I have mourned to me but seems,
Because beyond my vision, fell;
The light that glorifies my dreams
Is powerful in the world as well.

To laugh and strive and yet to steel
My heart to meet whatever fate
The darkest future may reveal,
Then am I strong though desolate.

Eternal life is my one right,
And as the world is, such are we;
Have I not scorned my youth's delight
And smiled supreme in agony?

I welcome either pang or feast,
I am content to stand alone;
And though the night hang thick, at least
The turgid night is all mine own.

How should I mourn the griefs that I
Can ne'er express?—Had I the strength
To tell of death then I should die
The conqueror of death at length! . . .

With wine my soul I surfeited,
And woman ever I disown,
So to base passion I am dead:
I am content to stand alone;

Chill fear I wooed to sap my might
Since joy returns to misery . . .
And I have scorned my youth's delight
And laughed supreme in agony!

WILLIAM BLAKE.

LITTLE songs like fairies winging
Down the happy star-ways, falling,
When you heard his fancy singing
Many a joy of gold and blue,
Glancing, gleaming, dancing, dreaming,
Did you hear him laughing, calling,
Calling you?

Little songs he spied and caught you
Though you dallied, weeping, praying;
Through bright woodlands wild he brought you
Under skies of white and blue;
Glancing, gleaming, dancing, dreaming,
Where you played he lingered playing,
Playing too.

Little songs he left you, dying;
Songs that could not find him, hollow
With sick pining, lured him, sighing;
And his dreams of gold and blue,
Glancing, gleaming, dancing, dreaming,
These are lost until we follow,
Follow too.

A SONNET OF LIFE.

WHAT souls there be, what dark things hovering

Within my flesh I know not, yet they cry
Alive although they voice my grief and sigh
Deeming my sorrow all their own, who bring
Each ashen morn a leaden faith to cling
About our hours of passion wrought to die.
—Miscreant faith!—I live: they know not why;
And ever they, their reasons clamoring,

Hear but strange echoes wrung from lips that sing
Blanched nightmares of delight, of deeps that lie
Beneath divine compassion, of joys that wing
Above young hope's expression and deny
Even my care; and they, though I am I,
Share deed and will with all my languishing.

THE ENCOUNTER.

S HE from the wanton highway of delight,
He from the gloom ascetic of his cell,
Looked each on each. She smiled; he
heeded well

The proffered lure, and shuddered from her sight;
Then that his flesh be purged of fear his might
Strove forth to succour her by prayer and spell;
Jesting she swore to gain him, and to quell
His virgin virtue, laughing in the night.

Upward she reached, he stooping down to meet
Her yearning face with wistful eyes of care,
And side by side for them one day was sweet.
She rose . . . he fell . . . she kissed the cross and he,
Her futile worshipper, in shrill despair
Flung to the skies his reeking blasphemy.

THE APOSTATE.

HE had said, "Thank God for my body obscene,
For the lust that oppresses life, choking me;
Hereby shall I prove my faith serene,
Hereby shall my flesh's mortality,
Dire flame of passion, foul, unclean,
To my holy faith yield subsidy."

And he cried, "And thus shall my hope avoid
The broad ways thronged by gay retinues
Forth by pleasure to death decoyed—
To death all hasten and hope pursues!
Yet I by my dauntless belief up-buoyed
Can shun no boon that desire may choose."

So wine he drank and he fed his lust:
Should he falsify his faith by doubt?
To flee the vile would belie his trust!
So he took his part in the giddy rout;
For the sake of his faith he drank disgust;
And his life was the life of the ruck without.

And he wails, "Hell help me, slake my thirst!
Bring me food for my feverish love to-night,
For I ache desirous—fate reversed
From my one-time virtue, chill with fright!"
He cries, "Hell help me or be accurst—
Give me joy once more in my sin's delight."

“Scourge me and burn me until the day
Pours over the rainbow brink of the land:
I must love or perish, and love can allay
The willing rage of your bitter hand:
Scourge me and burn me, beat and flay,
And so shall my truant desire be fanned.”

And he cries, “Would God that my youth were mine,
And the spring once more and a woman’s love,
For the green runs down to the blue sea-line
Where the soughing sand and the live waves move;
But her mouth for my love and the red rich wine
Are as far from me as the sky above.”

And he wails, “Hell help me and slake my thirst!
Scourge me and burn me, beat and flay!
And so may I love with my flesh accurst
Ere the night skies whiten and blanch the day,
For I ache desirous: all love rehearsed
Is the boon fain lost for the boon I pray.”

THEY TALK OF LOVE.

THEY talk of love for they have known
All ways of life—each mad remove
That lags to death; and all alone,
They talk of love.

And every aching hour we strove
Is heavy with our pleasure sown,
The earth beneath, our tears above.

You hear their cant—each man his own—
The lust of flesh, the thirst thereof?
You hear their laughter and their moan?
They talk of love.

LOOKING SOUTHWARD.

FROM the creeping deep darkness dim
Far shadows of sunset brood
From the shroud of hill and tree
To the wash of the ocean-brim;
And a broken solitude
Sweeps over the sleeping sea.

The shape of the wraith-like moon
Goes up, and I know not why;
And I long for the dazzling reach
Of the northern plains at noon;
And I hear from the echoing sky
The moan on the ocean-beach.

The drift of our thought goes on
Like the breath of the shifting wind;
And we hear faint echoes afar;
And we breathe the fragrance wan
Of the years we leave behind;
And we know not what we are.

O would that I could weep
And mine anguish so avail
—'Tis the prayer of my every breath—
That my body I might sweep
On, on, like a scudding sail,
On the flood of my tears to death!

IN THE CAFE.

OF all the sweetest could there be
Another who could seem so fair,
Another who could charm despair
Into sweet realms of fantasy,
Another who might love like she?

I wrought the magic of desire
And I have found the joy thereof
Upon the flower-strewn ways of love,
Where never earthly foot may tire;
And further none shall e'er aspire.

The opulence of beauty such
As seeks desire can never cease
From out arch eyes to plead and please;
But we regret who love so much
The many lips we may not touch.

They come, they go, they pass again,
And on each face and in their eyes
New subtle beauties I surprise—
Appealing pity, mute disdain,
And charms which know not what they feign.

They come and go in rainbow-streams,
They pass me by, and watching them
Out of the past I overwhelm
The future while the present seems
A flickering shadow fraught with dreams.

I know her not. Unseen till now,
She smiles with wistful dalliance;
Quick gleaming pleasure and sweet chance
Illume her vision and endow
Her lips and cheeks and pallid brow.

I dream of her divinity;
She knows not, and when she has left,
Forgetting I shall be bereft
Of each dear thought which seems to be
Part of my life and destiny.

She goes, and each that takes her place,
A variant of light love and ease,
A soft note 'mid deep harmonies,
Leaves in the memory of her face
Dreams her successor shall erase.

I hear the music thrill and swoon
And mingle with the traffic-beat;
Far off, beyond the livid street,
Above the glare, the tardy moon
Mocks the long tedious afternoon.

THE DEAD SAINT.

THROUGH hurtling space he fled from star to
star
On pinions of damnation, for there trailed
Upon him frantic shapes which clutching wailed,
A long black mass which mouthed each wound and
scar,
Their dry lips mumbling love with lust to mar
His vigour by their weakness; and he quailed,
And headlong down the darkness flashed and failed,
Held by their black mass weltering from afar.

He cried: "They burden me and drain my blood
And from their sated vampire-love eschew
Me victim, till they famish when they claim
Me saviour, lord of love! . . . This time-long flood
Reeks—whence they praise my glory and pursue
Me ever . . . pity, O my God, my shame!"

IN THE REALM OF NIGHT.

I.

THE flowing night awoken from my sleep
Revealed a world of glory, while I stood
Watching the hazy, creeping ocean sweep
Out of all depths beyond where cloud and flood
Grew one in darkness. Shimmering overhead
Sheer cliffs ran high of jagged crag and wood,
And o'er white marble balustrades was shed
A moonlight calm. I stood alone. I deemed
This isolated fastness wrought for me;
Far down beneath the foaming water gleamed;
I stood alone in awed expectancy.

II.

Dark years long trodden down, my heritage,
Fell vanquished years which fed on love and care,
Surrendered to my will power to assuage
Remembered torture of my past despair:
My sorrow had enthroned me, I was strong.
From deeps afar the livid ocean bare
Swooned to the shore, met by swart trees athrong;
And beetling cliffs and sky-caught mountains walled
The outmost wilderness whence haggard trees
Clung huddling thick—beyond the earth, recalled,
Lay, a rank flood of writhing memories.

III.

Clear on a gust of laughter came her voice;
I heard her footsteps touch the ivory stair;
Her fragrant raiment fluttering held my choice
Pledged to divine desire; and dubious there
Confronting silence for one moment bright
The world I knew—and from within the glare
Across the purple darkness billowed white;
And tower and carven pillar, sculptured forms
Grotesque and noble, fountain and cascade,
Beneath white stars aglint in clustering swarms,
Shone from amid the glimmering garden glade.

IV.

One moment's pause shall brave oblivion,
One moment held my life. Then forth she leapt
And straitway all before her radiance shone
With sickly lustre fain to intercept
No boon or mandate of her presence—she,
White-swathed drew close and by me, laughing,
swept
Back to the glare within and fled from me
Through rooms deserted while her loveliness
Filled these unlighted haunts of revelling death,
Silent save for the threshing of her dress
And the low tremor of her eager breath.

V.

Seductive for my soul she lured me on,
The reject of the world, me who had caught
Dim rapture from the sky to learn anon
Remorse of hope from futile passion wrought,
Stale years the dower of time to time returned,
Rich with all life and with my longing fraught;
I followed her, for her my being yearned
As death must crave for life, as life for love,
As love for sorrow—from the fleeting walls
Quick mirrors flashed reflecting her above;
She fled before me through the vacant halls.

VI.

Drugged incense and the balm of petals crushed,
Of beauty all her face the holiest,
Soft melodies and sense of silence hushed
To hear the mute response of worship blessed—
All this so sweet was mine that hallowed hour
When my strong life, proved by past bitter test,
Knew love at length so longed-for by her power;
Yea, sweet, and still my solitude again
Lives in each joy reviving for my care
Thy love that sought me fleeing, fleeing then,
My love that found thee sweet and perished there.

VII.

And hope endowed her with my love, with time
Whereof each moment caught was sweet for her,
With vital worship offered up, sublime;
All else abandoned showed her lovelier;
My hoarded virtue fervent yet for truth
Enshrined her resolute still to aver
Sweet her divinity by toil and ruth,
Revealing earth devoid and love all vain—
Whereat I doubted her, and doubting fled
To seek some worth of beauty to maintain;
Now all is silent—even death is dead.

VIII.

And so too frail for worship her I left;
And wide with haunting memories of that night
My baffled vision shrank from her bereft
And my whole strength for love of love took flight;
Along dumb galleries, illumined ways,
Through vacant halls beneath dark dome and white,
Aggrieved I braved the eddying of spent days.
Tempestuous the tide of years that swelled
To daunt advance, encumbering followed me
Till from the dusky rampart I beheld
Murk sunken clouds and heard the muffled sea.

IX.

Joy far too faint and transient to revive
—As by some odour reminiscent yet
With youthful rapture potent to deprive
Fate of some vanquished hour—this joy, my debt
From centuries of meditative awe,
Had failed before her; nor could I forget
Thereof the onetime knowledge though I saw
Now night impassive, sombre, taciturn,
Yielding not joy but yielding me again
Obscurity of hope still strong to yearn
For the void dreams that hollow years retain.

X.

One moment known my being's rapture marked
Thenceforth an alienated memory
Sweet when my will bore hope, with woe embarked
On perilous ways when sorrow menaced me;
And since illumined from my soul the world
Had once appeared all-good, by that decree
All else I spurned; for passion had been hurled
As to the brooding confines darkly girt
Whereon I gazed and on the changing sky,
Patient to find the charm that would avert
The dire threat dreaded of sweet years that die.

XI.

And though time withers, time shall ever thrive
Self-wrought to make diversion at my will,
While, creature of dead ages, I derive
All that has been, and all shall time fulfil;
And what has yielded life more life shall yield;
And I shall perish never though I still
Forget the beauties which the past revealed;
As any hour the beauty of some maid,
Receptacle of wanton love and charm,
Detaches life until such memories fade
Like ripples lost upon the level calm.

XII.

Then I arose and paced the beetling height
Expectant of desire, and while I stood
Confronting silence, from within the light
Shone thirsty for my life. My solitude
Yearned for the mirth of glittering revelry;
And then I found the flags beneath were strew'd
With gaudy petals breathing drowsily;
And from the lofty portals wafted fell
Dim harmonies of wonderment, all choice
Insatiable thereof; and o'er the swell,
Clear in the muffled music, thrilled her voice.

XIII.

And so she came to me and down lit ways,
Through glittering corridors and vestibules,
We wandered happy with a glad amaze
Amid the gathering revellers and fools,
Clowns quick with joyous folly jesting loud;
I knew that bliss which naught save pleasure rules;
And light refrains rose from the mingling crowd,
Sweet woman-laughter dulcet and unbound
To heavenward flight, deep vibrant tones and free,
Reechoed with their movement, and the sound
Became one varying vivid symphony.

XIV.

Sweet earnest of eternity of love,
Her I beheld with dazzled vision; her
Beholding, life I deemed good but to prove
My being hers, my passion lovelier
Than faith or base devotion and mine own;
She took my love and smiled with sweet demur;
Rose-petal-deep we lay, we two alone
Lulled by faint music silent or with speech
Made warm with touching lips warm as her breast
Against my skin, and her lips could beseech
Only the rapture that our love confess'd.

XV.

And love exultant, love abandoned me;
I have no need for her nor can I bear
Her murmurous kisses breathing flattery;
Her soft cool shape enrages me; her hair,
Her ravishing shape of face and breast and flank,
Belie past pride of honour, for I share
Idolatry of flesh with her who sank
Down to this pomp of barren turpitude;
And still the throbbing balmy air is rife
With dull enchantment, loud with love and feud,
And cosmic ripples billow through my life.

XVI.

And I am surfeited with happiness,
Shamed by the homage of rich joys in flight,
Revolted, faint with visions which obsess
Ambition vainly through the fervent night;
I have outstriven need, the purblind past
Gapes for my barren being while my might
Pines for the future eager to recast
This sick hour's adamant inheritance;
And love importunate for my desire
Absorbs all hope, and in a gaudy trance
Alone I watch the glittering hours expire.

XVII.

Alone, for I have fled from her, I stand
Unawed by silence—yea, defiant I
Confront this moving reach of sea and sand
And overreaching heights of cloud and sky—
Which pause but alter ever, grim and tense—
This air, each second, only stirs to die;
But from behind all this Omnipotence
Stares ever through my nakedness and strange
Thoughts whimpering from abysses well through me
Dead where the light consumes all hope, where change
Abiding mocks me; but I cannot flee.

XVIII.

Winged harmonies have lured and captured me
And ceasing dropt me in the dead abyss
Beneath extinction, where hope lavishly
Devouring life so failed by artifice;
And while I poised my soul upon one note
Which thrilled the zenith, beneath my cowardice
Drew down my hankering to the depth remote;
Thus though I strove futility I found;
And, waking from dead slumber, fugitive
My soul has sought itself and every sound
Whereon faith clung collapsed—yet I must live.

XIX.

She came to me; her fragrant hair afleck

About her shoulders touched my lips; she hung
The burden of her arms about my neck

And, piteous as an outcast wraith among
Past opulence, she sought for life from me

With proffered vampire-love—her hot mouth clung
Athirst upon my throat despairingly;

Her chill arms trembled and her speech convulsed

Sobbed plaintively for love by right of grief,
And on my heart austere her bosom pulsed

With fearful hunger eager for relief.

XX.

And she has fallen hence forever, lost;

And never shall reluctance once retain
Thought for this amorous thing, for she has cost

My life all future will to find again
Her supple flesh mine own to love and hold,

And wine the boon to quell her coy disdain;
And as all vanished power of time is told

Within the pulsing of an instant, she

One silver glimpse is bright within me yet,
One sweetness pledged to immortality,

Which hope and life or love can ne'er forget.

XXI.

No boast of courage mine or fortitude
Or virtue, nor shall vice enthrall desire;
But I shall live so may no lore elude
Me, and my thought may grovel or aspire.
Life I shall hold, life I shall comprehend;
And though death-wearied yet I shall not tire,
For having life I change, I shall transcend
All my past will of love and reverence.
Thus only can I suffer as I must,
Thus only can I find Omnipotence;
My doubt each day shall draw more near to trust.

XXII.

And even now the night has vanished—here
The molten sunrise splashed across the wave
Fires the horizon, rugged clouds uprear
And issuing flames of gaudy brilliance lave
Long shores resplendent in the towering west,
Black far beyond where hurtling tempests rave.
And I am sickened with desires unguessed;
Enraged, disabled, patient I shall wait,
Till through the world undaunted I can fare;
And shimmering space I hear reiterate
Blank moments which repeat my void despair.

OMAR DEAD.

FROM the squat tavern laughing to the east
He turned; within the murmuring babble
ceas'd;

And red wine split on scattered roses there
Exhaled the waning glory of the feast.

And where white mist of dawn like snow alight
Devoured the withering files of stars and height,
Flat deserts and far ridges all aglare
Poured forth the morning, flooded from the night.

And praying bowed he, knowing nought of shame,
And watched the glowering sunrise burst aflame.

The sky-girt earth with steadfast day shone clear,
He marked how wan each dawn-red cloud became.

Then one cried gladly, "Drink, for night 'is done!"
Another echoed, "Greet the sacred sun—

"Drink, for we drank our night-long glory here,
"And shall the dark surpass this day begun?" . . .

So think them dead, gone with their gusty hours,
Dead, covered with the whirl of withered flowers,

Fled whence their lives once throve voluptuous,
Before whom still the fleeing future cowers.

Here on the frontiers of the infinite
They tarry, here rehearse the past, no whit
Less puppet-like than you, and they were thus;
And freed from flesh to flesh they still submit.

They strive within you, sharing your warm love,
Hers; when you drink they know the thrill thereof,
And gladdened then they make their secret yours;
Your bondage is their homage from above.

And sweetest of all sweetest things it is
To tell of happy deeds while still you kiss,
While clinging flesh to eager flesh outpours
Love, sated never of desire or bliss.

Yet sweeter 'twere if fashioned—were it not?—
Some hap so joyous which, though you forgot,
Still charmed with roseate glamour would survive;
This none could scorn till it became his lot.

He lingers where the mirth of life is sweet,
When she surrenders then his glad lips heat
Her with your ardour, in your flesh alive
His proven vigour makes your love complete.

Yet all like bubbles speeding on the tide
Gleam each one lifelong moment, and with pride
Reflect the flickering glimmer of dim suns;
And none need question where they all subside.

One moment's life and ages infinite
Lie dark forever—were one moment fit
 Wherewith to challenge time? Your life was once
A dead note sounded; time shall stifle it.

Thus even while the transport of sure faith
Uplifts you godlike over life and death
 Down, down you drop, less than all things that be,
Known creature merely of your fleeting breath.

You know not suns that shine or what have shone,
You know not what shall lure your pleasure on,
 You pause, and for a moment then you see
Perchance the truth—you pause, and it is gone.

One day is yours and will you laugh or weep
Ere the proud sun falls vanquished? You shall sleep
 Through blind eternal wastes of silence dead;
Sow what you choose, you have no time to reap.

And should you rise awoken from the din
When earth's last day has shattered all therein
 Then you would know, by care uncomforted,
Your sin was great because you feared to sin.

By flight how shall one triumph or make end?
Shall warm love spurned and perjured wine amend
 Death by the drone of sluggish years that rust?
Shall thus your praise of gratitude ascend?

He would not let one hour untasted lie,
But grasped the midge-like moments darting by,
A cloud bewildering, deadening him, a gust
Lost in the bright blue of the moving sky.

How could he hold this precious dower of youth
Nor take each gem of happiness and ruth,
The opal-spray of pleasure which was his
As, for his life, all heaven of earth, forsooth?

So live each burning day and laugh and strive—
What though the blank blind future may deprive
Your soul of life? You still can drink and kiss;
Or shall sloth shackle you with gag and gyve?

What triumph from the sorry future fell
To them like blood from foemen vanquished well
Who caught the scudding moments, wringing thence
Sharp cries of writhing horror hot from hell!

Let then the tide of ages unadorned
By prey of pity wrecked where pity mourned,
Keep for your life a harbour of defence
And though white billows menace, you are warned.

Drink, for you live as through a fog of days
Bound each to each and weighed with mirth and
praise;

Drink, for you die—this cup obliterates
The biting shame to think that life decays.

Rain for red roses but for you red wine,
And kindled by this draught you may divine
The charm whence life prevails, where death
abates—

And what then would you take and what resign!

The wistful faith which made your youth so dear
Though failure piteous ever faltered near—

This wanton faith conceived, and so was born
Vain disillusion cursed by oath and tear.

For hope is but deception wrought to lure
Subjected life to love, which shall assure

Your flesh survivor of your death forsworn;
Bowed folly mumbles that this love is pure

Time drugs your life with lies—thus mocking truth—
Drink deep then glad hours madly through your youth.

Red wine drink deep, and when warm love shall pale
Live in your memory's hoard of joy and ruth.

Fond childhood gathers knowledge, youth anon
Breaks forth and quick with pleasure hastens on;

But amorous lips and supple sinews fail,
And age remembers all when all has gone.

Youth aches with hot desires which magnify
When slaked his fervent will, and age must sigh

For dead years heavy with lost hope and fame.
Earth keeps no beauty if one thought can die.

And had you life undying would you heed
Vile torment or the spite of rage or greed?

How then would age be eager to reclaim
His years divine unknown to care or creed!

Yet who could laugh unless were sorrow born
To breathe succeeding hope in him? To mourn

Is bitter when you weep, but ends despair:
It is the darkness that awakes the dawn.

Strange ways there are—some hasten on, some plod;
Some loiter, singing—all the ways men trod

Lie deep with mouldering follies, yet you share
Their stubborn purpose still to find some god.

And ever dreams retrieve rich memories

Bright with split gold of skies on fairy seas,

And Time, proud king, who haunts this magic shore,
Feeds on your life ere all your vigour flees.

Your life, a note struck once to thought, may sound
The same hereafter, from strange years unbound

One flash might waken what has been before:
Then you would find again what you have found.

So think for comfort death was happy till

Life brought you forth; then, though a hostage still

Lordlike you take all fate with joyful scorn;
And when you weary, death shall be your will.

Yet why should God be God and you be you,
He be omnipotent and your whole due

Extinction, chance-caught from the dark, forlorn,
Less than one grain of all the earth on view?

If you can dare all silence, by your grace
Confront dark solitude until all trace

Of deeds and thought recalled desert you, then
Shall Truth shine forth revealed before your face.

But who shall dare to thrust desire aside
Deaf to the merry music of his pride,

And, heedless of the mad applause of men,
Be Silence, finding Silence for his bride?

Nay, though you guess that life belies you, wait
And, till you die, carouse and love in state;

For who shall hail the darkness shall become
One with the dark soul of the dark world's fate.

But all is chosen and the future's shape
Looms from the mist beyond—and none escape

The deadening lapse of ages wearisome;
And all who love must venerate the grape.

Thus with the drowsy odour of his thought
Upon you, ebbs your life and you are fraught

With the light charm that held him swaying where
Love laughing in the tangled vine was caught.

And what sweet thing were sweeter than her kiss?
And was there ever wiser wine than this

Which wakens winsome pleasure, making care
Drudge of your will enchanting life to bliss?

Because blind hours strive not in your behalf
But perish too, what solace shall you quaff?

Because your sickening vision aches with grief,
Drink deep the anguish of despair and laugh!

Some men protest much faith and gaze above,
Their fervour eager for the fruit thereof;

And, since they live, they falsify belief
Which from their deeds has but a sorry proof.

Think of one valiant that, with love alight,
Sure his whole being's faith, his daring might

And sense were perjured, palsied, struck to death—
How then would valour scream against the night!

What can men's rant of fortitude and faith
Be to desire that fears not fault or scathe?

If truth and beauty vanish with your breath
Then all the world is frailer than a wraith.

And should you live forever were it less
Delight than pain to feel your mad distress?

But lest this knowledge overwhelm your thought
Fain life must keep the death that you possess.

And are they mighty only who of love
Dare hatred—for they surely reach above
Their shadows which had burdened them distraught,
Who smile to find they still must strive who strove?

Perchance the Truth lies lurking where you peer,
Mute in the flagon—can you see or hear
With each cup emptied some new wisdom? Well,
No doubt your failure still will persevere!

For with each pledge you gay carousers all
Become one being, mingling sweet and gall;
And wisdom woos you both from heaven and hell;
Such boundless lore no morrow can recall!

And having drunk one drinks again to show
He has no care nor fears to undergo
Death; in the miser's virtue aches forewarned
All that his distant children can foreknow.

What sickly loathing purged with penitence
For deeds they feared can speak from innocence—
What glad hours drunken with rich wine be scorned
By pallid care and cowering impotence!

Is it sobriety to pile and store
Gold, grubbing in the choking dust for more,
Dead to the splendour of the earth and skies,
Dead to the rage that howls from shore to shore?

Bright gold is worth the spending—shall one hoard
That fools may squander? Drunken days deplored
May dare to stutter wisdom to the wise;
And all shall perish: death is their reward.

Yet all your deeds though worthy or amiss
Strive upward and all speech and artifice
Is the dull utterance of dim love for God;
So too the spell of wine and avarice.

Life! What a world of glory yields the spring,
The deep green splashed with pale trees blossoming,
Incarnate thought divine each bud and pod,
The vivid magic of sweet visioning.

And who have reeled beneath the yoke of wine
Have trodden hell; and heaven to them, condign,
Revealed, needs never thought or tongue to tell
The suffering and the bliss which they divine.

And these extremes he knew—in petals deep
Where roses dropt their fragrance as in sleep,
He loved and drank and pondered while the swell
Rose slowly, slowly, and he watched it creep.

Life, if unthreatened by death's fretting brim,
Were wearied ever by one dullard whim;
Death is the drug which soothes you where you lie
Sick; when you wake the dawn is all aswim.

What beauty keeps the far wide glare where day
Devours the world? Fled from the evening gray

A wondrous sorrow wraps the night: to die
Gives sweetness to the horror of decay.

With wonderment he saw each morn renewed,
He stared at death and, laughing, was subdued

By skies and leaves and petals redolent,
With love which lit his magic solitude.

And vexed with never wrangle or debate
He had no feverish will for wealth or state;

Stars, flowers and wine and love, with these content,
These should he barter both for gold and hate?

And were there left no worthy feat or plan
Then lulled by wine and poppies life might span

Death on fantastic, white-winged reveries
And find again the void where life began.

He loved, he gloried—let his deeds suffice;
And his renown divert you, not entice;

His life is but a husk; he drank the lees;
And of his virtue there remains the vice.

For men to-day upon the borderland
Where soul and body mingle, toiling stand,

Awed, venturesome, expectant—shall you then
Fall back carousing, purposeless, unmann'd?

Speak, is it joy or wisdom that you ask,
Light mirth and love where glowing summers bask,
Or shall you swell the honoured ranks of men
And, one with their resolve, achieve your task?

Vain children of vain worlds who long have played
At wars and pomp with gems and silk arrayed,
Still must they frivol, shameless as they be?
Still must they plunder—men are still afraid?

For thrones and drones and prodigies of wealth
Are spared, and prospering knaves mar life and health,
Yours, they your masters—blind: they do not see
The powers which shall destroy them—not by stealth.

And skies and flowering earth and silence stored
With wisdom—these were his—and still afford
All hope of truth and joy—shall you forego
Life for the riot which red hours accord?

But if you revel, pledge him, you would be
Still more than king or statesman—and as free;
If folly sways you, kiss and drink, and so
Lapse through the silence of futurity.

THE PASSING OF NIGHT.

BEYOND and on each side the sombre sea
That sways and stretches to the distant sky
Tinged with approaching dawn; and
shadowed o'er
And blended with the dark invisibly,
Black cliff and shore.

Above eternal calmness,—underneath
The wash of water and a subtle breath
That stirs the seaweed, mingling with the croon
Of lispings waves;—above me chill in death
The far, faint moon.

MY LADY OF DREAMS.

SWEET, with the dark of night entangled in
Her bright hair's revelry, and with the sky's
Clear blue illumining her eyes,
She comes—more sweet than hope may hope to win.

Out of the misty stillness of the night
She wakes, as I have seen a cloud-swathed moon
Wake o'er a shadowy lagoon:
She comes to me in dreams, and it is light.

Dear, I have loved you only. I have seen
Sometimes a faint half-glimpse of you elsewhere;
Gazing, I learnt a fresh despair
And knew my heart as void as it had been.

She lingers with my dream yet dare not stray
Beyond—alas! too fair she is and weak.
Her lips, her skin, her bloodless cheek,
Too sweet for life, would wither up by day.

I mourn to see—more grief, what else could move?—
Her cold white breast and neck, her phantom thighs.
Alas, her full red mouth and eyes
Are quick with love and yet she cannot love.

Is there no charm or hope that can forgive
My rapturous longing and her futile kiss?
I love! Can any grief match this?
She has not lived nor shall she ever live!

THE BREAK OF DAY.

ATHWART the east faint mists of light ascend,
The dark yet covers plain and tree and hill,
And cold, the long night lags toward its end,
And all the world is still.

Pale hangs the sky; then slowly every star
Fades in the gathering brilliance of the light
Until the sky is vacant and afar
The gaudy east flames bright.

But though the grim day loiter drearily,
And though the staring sun beat down and burn
The whole world's hope, yet day is fair to me:
Night shall again return.

WITH FLOWERS.

HOW can I utter what my soul would tell
When thou art far
Or, speaking, tell what are
Thy subtle strange sweet charms whose magic spell
Lifts up my life beyond the furthest star?

How can I speak when thy sweet eyes
Shine down on me?
I, striving up to thee,
Gaze as the starry sea up to the skies
And find, O Love, a wordless mystery.

THE AWAKENING.

EACH hour that passes, dead for evermore,
Lies in the waste of ages whence the stale
Air of unwoken silence, shore to shore,
Reeks unto death, and where far plains grow pale,
Fumes in a light mirage whose azure floor
Floats dream-born, burnished citadel and sail! . . .
And I can hear the very silence wail
With cries flung back from crag to desert-vale.

Day in and out we, lured by tardy hopes,
Drawn on to slumber, lag so drearily
That almost God would light the poppied slopes,
Clogged with the living bogged in agony.
And still we struggle. Vainly each man gropes
Death at his feet, and woman at his knee
With naked smiles and hidden mockery,
Scarce dreaming she is damned as well as he.

Dark death swoons on before us, and behind
The void, alone—yet this awoke and wed
Life unto life with love, and hopes that twin'd
Sweet blossoming joys about us, limb and head! . . .
I can hear the shrieking voices of the wind
Shudder across the waste, dispirited:
Surely death's silence shall awake the dead:
Shall woe not rule when joy and love have fled?

RONDEAU.

LET me forget that I have seen her face,
If that could ever be! If sorrow base
Could breathe oblivion on her to suppress
Her rapture of impassive loveliness
Unknowing, I would yearn for her embrace.

(That I am mortal in my dire disgrace;
But that I die, and that I can erase
No jot of what shall be nor help what is,
Let me forget.)

She is not here. . . . And though remembrance trace
Sweet fantasies of her, and though she place
Her hands in mine deep in my dream and kiss
The longing of my lips away—her grace
And she have perished utterly, but this
Let me forget.

NIGHTFALL.

S WART hill and shrunken valley, long gray clouds
Smoke all into the sunset, interlac'd
With sheen of gold and crimson; vapor shrouds
Droop from the sky upon the ocean-waste.

Long barren shores by any hope untrod,
Dark seas as empty of all loveliness;
And overhead, the silent ways of God,
Stretch; and the silent world is pitiless.

So—And the day drifts outward o'er the sea,
And the dark waters, leprous-white with scars,
Move; and a murmur ushers back to me
A grisly night aghast with shivering stars.

REQUIEM.

R OSES to twine about her hair,
Roses to nestle on her breast,
To breathe my love, that I may share
With her her very soul! No more!
She is at rest.
Her I shall see no more.

Heap withered poppies on her grave;
Weep not nor smile. No more I fear
Her frown—no more—though once her slave;
For she is lost in utter death.
She cannot hear.
O would that I were Death!

Breathe, O my heart, not love,
Love for her perished love, but make
Each breath one pregnant curse above
My utmost hate! Life-bearing World,
You cannot wake
Her sleep—O soulless World!

MEDLEY.

HE found her where white daisies blew
 Against the wood in drift of spray,
 And glimpses of the sky upthrew
 Blood from the birth of day.

Profusely hung long creepers looped
 Fantastic from high boughs and near
Her feet they trailed. He paused, he stooped.
 He bent toward her ear.

He fell beside her and he rose,
 Though weak and in a reverie
He murmured, "O those eyes unclose
 The Gates of Heaven to me."

She rose her eyes and lips abrim
 With love. She stretched her arms around
His neck and laughing softly, him
 She kissed: I heard no sound.

I waited. When I looked again—
 A sudden gloom had dimmed mine eyes—
I saw them racked with care and pain
 Reach struggling up the rise

As of a spectral cliff—no jot
They rose, but silently they fell
Down where eternal chasms rot,
Depthless and terrible.

O for the fragrant hope of youth
When all was sweet, the future bright
With shadows of the magic Truth
—Youth dies. Putrescent blight

Lies thick upon the flowers he plucked,
His hands are raw, his face is wan,
From life to chaos he is sucked,
And his slightest hope has gone.

I said: "Love merely is desire:
"She is the glass wherein he sees
"Himself and deems it her, the fire
"And crown of mysteries!"

Did she not echo all I said
When bending, as I spoke, she prest
My hands near where her hot heart bled,
Against her beating breast?

And still she smiles half wistfully, ...
O tender lips, O broken smile,
Perjured from mirth to grief for me,
And yet supreme the while!

If God is mindless and His state
But that of earth then surely I
Can wake Him up to life, through hate,
By curse and blasphemy!

And, living, He will understand
How He has made the world to weep,
And, by His might and His command,
Death like a storm shall sweep

Out of existence utterly;
And we, poor creatures, who were swirled
One time in death, will ever be
The masters of the World!

And still she smiles, some memory
Sweet from its heaven lighting her
Soft, tender, eyes; and over me
Breath-blown rose petals stir.

I shall not weep, I shall not whine
Whatever be my fate to bear,
Still may I know my soul divine
And over all despair!

Still may I front the world and laugh
Triumphantly and when the pain
Of death is in me, let me quaff
His cup and laugh again!

And should I seek Omnipotence
To beg a favour, only this
May I implore in my defence:
Strength o'er all cowardice.

And still she smiles half-wistfully, ...
O tender lips, O broken smile
Perjured from mirth to grief for me,
And yet supreme the while!

MONISM.

THE million noises jangled in the street
Confused together (loud and clear apart:
The rattling trains, the rhythmic clattering beat
Of horses and the drudge of foot and cart);
Heard far away, speak in one low, full tone,
Dull, heavy and incessant, thus in me
The echoes of a myriad ages moan,
All swollen in one self, one mystery.

Echoes we are ourselves; while round about
We hear the babbling of the multitude
And destitute of will and sense, speak out
The sounds we hear at chance, ourselves endu'd
With death; and, dying, we shall be we know
But what we were our little lives ago.

TERRICK-TERRICK.

ONLY the stillness of the air
 Burdens the far unending plain;
 And but for this there is no sound save where
 Some bird replies to one that calls again.

Only the stillness of the night:
 And nothing to relieve the drift
Where plain meets tree and plain, except the light
 Thrown by the dim moon through a cloudy rift.

Only the stillness of the air:
 Yet this, each moment, still exhales
The breath of Time, and here as everywhere
 The changelessness of unfelt change prevails.

CAUGHT FROM THE LEES.

I SAW him where the doomed, a thickening flood,
Jostled the brazen Gates of Heaven. He
cried

With dry-parched throat and lips beslimed with blood
And sought in death the hope that life denied.

He rose above the whining ruck around
And with no prayer he stood, and where he turned
His stricken eyes, I saw that clouds were wound
About the skies; all like a furnace burned.

"I have dreamed," he wailed. "Enough, that I have
dreamed!

Weaving the magic of my thought to sense,
Crowning thereby my soul above what seemed,
Sick fool of faith, to be Omnipotence!

"God like a despot seems," he cried, "yet sleeps
Benumbed,—no blasphemy if this He does—
No blasphemy unless His love He weeps
Even upon my own: it is not thus.

"I fail to-day, to-day I die, I wail
Hopeless, not praying, at His gates. Let be.
I die to-day—next time I shall not fail,
And God shall wither beneath My mockery!"

My vision in his speech was all consumed.
Straightway the clouds flared up into the sky;
And all the world was raw with blood and fumed
Far in the vision of my misery.

RONDEL.

THEY are the slaves of death who fear to die,
They are the cowards who strive against
their fate—

And thus it seemed no courage can frustrate
Change, ill, or death, nor virtue fortify.

My actions seemed but growths of greed and hate
About an idle pool of misery

They are the slaves of death who fear to die,
They are the cowards who strive against their fate.

My faith has sprung from doubt. I know that I
Am sure of death, yea ! and I know I wait,

Throned on this towering wind which fills the sky !
I live triumphant and insatiate.

On Me, myself alone, need I rely :

They are the cowards who strive against their fate !

A SONG OF GALLANTRY.

SURE, once I knew a mighty lord,
His arm was strong and steady;
But little care could he accord
To look upon his lady.

O she was proud, demure, sedate,
And pure beyond all mention;
He had some damsels, six or eight,
And they had his attention.

His lady so cold, so cold,
That long I looked and tarried;
I brought her rubies, pearls, and gold,
And not one gift miscarried.

Than his my dagger had more skill
Brim, brim thy cup! It quenches
One moment's thirst. Fill, drink, and fill!
So, first I had his wenches.

We fought, he fell; her mighty lord
Fell, broken by her scorning;
O she was sweet, but—by my sword!—
I left her ere the morning.

RESOLVE.

MY weakness is my strength: my yearning
thought
Proves, by its void, my hope's reality.
Now even with the torture that is wrought
By my own act, I laugh triumphantly.
Outside, the city's jar, the cries that swell
Jangled—you hear them?—let us laugh again!
Whatever billows bear me down, shall strain
To raise me to the skies: thus ill is well.
I fling a laugh alike at joy and pain!

I ask no boon of any: I am what
Myself alone decree. Nor shall I bow
A limb to any creed or man, my lot
Is even as I chose, and I allow
The slough of my sad ignorance to lie
Slow though my thoughts troop on. I would alloy
No atom of my care. Though I destroy
This meagre life, still fate I can defy—
I shall not shirk my pain for sake of joy.

I have striven and I have striven but to fail.
Each toiler bears some other down while he
Is earth to other feet; and who prevail
Triumph but for a day and equally

All seek a fate unknown. Who would frustrate
My will, I love no less yet I would send
His soul to death: I blame not nor commend.
Give me your love or, wanting that, your hate:
Strive we not all toward the self-same end?

A RONDEAU OF SOLIPSISM.

WHO is Great God? If we perish, then the dust
And mould of earth is God; and as we
must

We act, devoid of either praise or blame,
Hopeless of future life because we came
Ourselves from nothing, being lifeless save in name.

If God is visionless then we are thrust
To utter death, and love itself is lust,
Lust mingled with a sweet uncertain shame,
Who is Great God!

I am above this world of bud and rust,
I, even I, myself! I am supreme
Above all I perceive. I am the same
Now as all time ago; I live; I dream;
And I, I know, far over all distrust,
Who is Great God!

THE ETERNAL.

I AND the right, and naught beside,
The distant ocean's weary moan,
The murmur of the ebbing tide
Replying to the ocean sob;
This, and the world's eternal throb
And naught beside: I and the night alone.

I and the night. Above the sky
Shines with the myriad stars that rain
Their glory on the sea, while I
Linger amid Life's mystery
Until the night grows dark, the sea
Grows dark and mute, and only I remain.

AN INTERLUDE.

HE: Blue, blue eternally, dark waves and sky
Blue—and beyond unending deeps of blue,
This and the emerald earth, the sapphire
world,
Deny all hidden joy the boon of speech;
And so a vortex of gyrating thought
Uprearing blinds and suffocates me, yet
Could we but keep this glory, keep henceforth
This second now—so might we know remorse!

She: And like a bird with broken flight you fall.

He: No. I am unresolved. Could life be good
Were we not always hampered by some doubt?
Then, as I waited, in one blink I saw
Earth callow from all downy space become
This sphere of earth and water, all the seas
Wide-eyed with staring, flapping monsters, then
The new strange order of our lesser kind
Men enigmatic came before me, then
This world of cities, parliaments, and pomp,
And flaunting trade signs, hideous, unashamed,
Loud with the cult of gold, the instinct kept
Of children saving pebbles being made
The creed of all our rulers everywhere.

She: If I could keep this sea and sky, these flowers,
I should be happy but recurring thoughts
—Look, like those clouds across the sun—would
shadow

That isolated second. But there are
Bright balls and theatres, such a world of life;
And if you had the sun—

He: I'd barter it.

All for a rosebud or a memory,
Most likely, out of pity for this dust,
And then surrender all to doubt again. . . .
Yet fasting days and days I searched my soul
For wisdom which once found I would reject.
Moreover, I have watched the ceiling gape,
Swart faces slanting downward fell and fell,
Appearing, jeering, veering, leering, rearing,
Monotonous and voiceless and alive—
This when the night had cast me forth again,
Life out of death, a wonder to be tried
Again! So glad days revelled—I was there—
So was I bound by time or was I free,
I who was dead yet saw myself apart
Beholding life, indifferent of myself?
And is it best then now to strive and strive
Till timeless, changeless, centred on one thing,
On star or sound or truth or thought or deed
One blends himself as now, one with this sea? . . .
Thus Truth and Soul are one. . . . She does not
hear. . . .

To-morrow I shall never see her face—
Day struck from life, day chosen from all time
For this damnation—how shall to-morrow lag,
Lag like a thousand years! And in a week
I go whence I have come and she shall be
Only the phantom of a strange sweet dream. . . .
Life and my boundless soul, how shall this time
Lapse swifter than a meteor which, a streak,
Drops from the utmost height into the void!

NIGHT.

DARK lies the swollen ocean to the verge
Of vague horizon, where huge billows
sweep

In jagged lines against the sky; and deep
Continuous though distant booms the surge
Across the flood; while shivering stars emerge
Dim through the mist as eyes that blink with sleep;
And on the shore the long waves break and weep,
Lifting the echo of a funeral dirge.

The ocean strikes the land upon a shoal
Of sunken rocks; like snow-drift in the light
The current eddies back into the night
Where far I see the crested billows roll. . . .

How monstrous is the world, myself how slight!
Yet all I see is seen within my soul.

EGYPTIAN LYRICS.

I.—THE BUILDERS OF THE PYRAMID.

C ELESTIAL Khu-fu, Thou
King, art Osiris now.
Our lives were Thine, yet were we free
To live for Thee.

From youth to age we toiled,
All through our lives we toiled.
We saw Thee! Thou didst hear us sing
Our joy, O King!

Wherefore we builded this
Great temple for Thy bliss:
'Tis well for us that, dying, we
Shall live in Thee!

Our lives are Thine, and Thou
King art Osiris now.
As many as the ocean-waves
We were Thy slaves.

II.—A HYMN TO ISIS.

PHTHAH being God most wise
Created sky and earth;
The gods forth from His eyes
Leapt light with joy and mirth;
And from His mouth men came
Like spoken words aflame.

Set, art Thou also He?
Each god is God alone.
Anubis, Thy decree
Is death and none disown
Thy proffered rest; and none
The evil Set has done.

Isis, Whose life is love,
Whose love redeemed from death
All people, She above
The gods shall keep our faith—
Herself the Holy One,
More dazzling than the sun!

Sweet Hope of god and man,
Isis, beloved as well,
More lovely art Thou than
Even the gods can tell:
In His high ecstasy
God too must worship Thee.

III.—A PRAYER TO THE GREAT GOD THOTH
AND TO HIS AVATAR, THE IBIS.

HER song rose clear and sweet,
Thoth to Thy realms the moon;
And I lay at her feet
And listened half aswoon.

One ibis fleeting past
Dropt from the blue bright day,
And watched her, and at last
Flew by, flew far away.

And I have loved in vain!
O Ibis speedily
Come back, come back again,
Give back her love to me!

IV.—BRIDAL SONG.

AT dawn we rose, our mirth sped high
And chased the darkness from the sky;
The herdsmen with their flocks go by.
Night shall return with love and sleep.

The dawn flashed past the paling moon;
The day's toil is a joy to keep;
We laboured resting well at noon.
Night shall be warm with love and sleep.

More peaceful than the tomb is she;
Her feet I kiss so tenderly;
Her kisses like the stars shall be
When night returns with love and sleep.

The herdsmen by the riverside
They wander loitering by their sheep;
They hear my song, they know my pride:
The night is warm with love and sleep.

V.—THE EMBARKATION FOR BUBASTIS.

WELL freighted with gay flowers
And goodly wine, O Bast,
We'll fling aside the hours
Like glittering spray upcast,
Up to the stars divine!
The sails pull at the mast—
Hail, Bast, Thou God of Wine!

This day shall lengthen out
Through many dawns, we swear—
Men met we'll pledge and flout
And drink them from all care—
There shall be nought amiss:
With buds we'll deck the hair
Of every maid we kiss!

O we have wine and flowers
And songs and laughter, hark!
The amorous dawn is ours
And love dreads not the dark—
The green reeds dip and shine;
Put off, let us embark—
Drink, drink, O drink this wine!

VI.—SONG.

THE sun goes down ablaze and bright,
So stretch and rub your eyes:
We have slept all day; we were drunk all
night—
O, wine makes all men wise!

So now we'll pledge in turn each star,
And fools may drowse and yawn:
These flagons must be drained—Ha! Ha!
We'll drink from dusk to dawn!

VII.—IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE.

WHITE Nile boats flitting by
Mock the blue sky;
No longer need I sigh.
The tall palms barely stir.
I wait for her.

Night came so tardily. . . .
These gifts she had of me,
Pale pearls out of the sea,
Silk, fragrant oil and myrrh:
I dreamed of her.

This necklet now I bring,
This robe, this jewelled string—
O, she will dance and sing!
She is mine! Fate shall not err
From me or her.

White as her holy bed,
The moon burns overhead. . . .
O gold is rich and red!
These lotos-buds aver
My love for her.

Fruit I have brought and wine. . . .
And Thou art here!—Divine
Night shall incarnadine
Thyself, enrapturing me. . . .
I crave for thee!

VIII.—HARVEST SONG.

(An Adaptation).

THRESH, thresh, ye oxen, well,
Yea, thresh for us amain;
The straw is yours—to sell:
We'll keep the golden grain.

Well stalled, yourselves yoke up,
Thresh for yourselves again:
We'll home to drowse and sup—
We'll keep the golden grain.

IX.—A MIDDAY FESTIVAL.

RA Thou art now at noon,
At dawn Harmachis, soon
Shalt Thou be Tmu ere night—
We pledge Thee, O Thou Sun,
Feast Thou on our delight—
Three gods art Thou, yet One!

This is the mystery
Of all the gods there be:
There is one God alone:
And every thought is His—
Yet each god has his throne:
The Lord knows how that is!

All wisdom springs from doubt,
Death vomits all men out;
So kneel to Bird and Calf:
We know not what to think—
But we know how to laugh,
And we know how to drink!

X.—A SONG FOR THE KING'S FEAST.

REJOICE, until the silence falls,
The gentle silence of the tomb,
Rejoice within Thy palace walls,
O King, what grief could stay thy doom?
Yet life is thine and always life,
And love and strife.

O, death is but a well-wished draught,
To lull him to forgetfulness,
Who, having lived and loved, and laughed,
Would slumber mute and visionless;
So do we die that we may keep
The boon of sleep.

That we may sleep and then rise up,
So the dawn breaks, now here, now there;
Kiss, laugh, lift up this tingling cup;
No man can cease from life, I swear;
For life is ours and always life,
And love and strife.

A TAVERN TRAGEDY.

I DIDN'T hate him, not a bit. . . .
As from your beer just off the brim
You'd spill a midge and stamp on it,
My life repudiated him.

I'd never seen him once before.
He lurched in snivelling; he looked weak;
He propped himself against the door,
And as he breathed I heard it creak.

I had no need that he should live!
His sad glance shifted everywhere
So pitiful, so fugitive,
It seemed he staled the very air.

Then for one flickering broken phase
Forgot I all things, in one blink,
How months on months, and days on days,
Had maddened me with rage and drink.

Some Thing within me startled, gazed
Upon him through my opened eyes,
And I looked on, dazed, merely dazed,
Half-heedless of my own surprise.

My hand leapt forth and snatched a knife . . .
It's broken edge was bent and brown . . .
Oh, I was sickened with his life!
He fell, fell from me crashing down. . . .

I didn't hate him. . . . I don't know. . . .
Without one sound, one word, one curse,
I gave one stab, one movement—so—
And spilt him from the universe.

THE MICROCOSM.

PAIN, pain exalts me into consciousness:
I am awake! My jangled anguish rives
Each tense quick nerve pricked by unnum-
bered knives,
My only solace, my own dark distress.

Life mocks and agonises me—no less
Death, the far shimmer of a myriad lives,
Lies sparkling like calm seas, and breeds and thrives
Forever in each pang that I possess.

Clockwork automatons men go and come,
Loud, reflex—dead! and yet they strut and sulk,
Mere gibbering shapes, redundant, wearisome.

It aches, aches, aches—this world of grit and grime,
Myself, my tortured self, this huge, huge bulk!
Alone, I am the pain of all, all time.

TWO TRIOLETS.

ONE warm kiss stolen from her cheek
Is the whole sweetness I recall
Of one full golden glorious week!
One warm kiss stolen from her cheek
Makes faint my heart for all I seek
For who shall take her love, takes all. . . .
One warm kiss stolen from her cheek
Is the whole sweetness I recall. . . .

My passion billows back to her
Nor can I trouble her again,
Provoking love to sweet demur—
My passion billows back to her—
And sorry hopes forlorn recur
And deathly is my deathless pain.
My passion billows back to her,
Nor can I trouble her again.

EACH MAN IS EACH.

A MERE two hundred years ago he spoke,
He arguing with me—I can hear him croak
Still, at my side: “. . . . You are animated clay,
Dead for all time, alive just for one day!”
So he droned on and I, as vehement,
Cried, “No, I’ll prove that’s nonsense. . . .”

My dissent
Went throbbing up through him and from his lips
Became one sombre smile at my eclipse,
While I stood silent.

Then again I said:
“I’ve always lived! Are we forever dead
From the mere fact of dying? Then we die
Always—so we live always! I reply. . . .”
He scoffed. I answered: “How you talk of it,
Death—do you know what death is?—Hypocrite!
How can you tell save from experience?
So you have died, I think, already!”

Whence
A brief two centuries have been betrayed:
You made that gesture, so! which he then made
Who mocked me. . . .

Then in anger I caught up
His pistol from the table, and his cup,
His ruddy cup of crystal dark with wine,
Tipped over and he cursed, while I drank mine;
I cried: “I’ll prove you wrong! See, I can die. . . .”

And I watched that bird swoop fluttering from the sky;
And those dark boughs above us moved and stirred;
There came that little puff of wind. . . . I heard
That very sound of someone singing—There!
Wait, you can hear it! . . .

I said to him: "Take care:
"I'll prove I'm right!"

I held his pistol still;
Indeed his scorn was barely audible;
He swore, "Death makes you nothing!" I said: "Hold!
I'll prove I'm right!"

I felt the muzzle cold
Against my brow. He jeered; I saw him frown;
Then red with death the black world flung me down;
Away from me it fell, and roared, and crashed,
And all through those two hundred years I flashed:
And I am here. . . .

You are confronting me
Still, and his wine is trickling down your knee;
And you assert:

"You are animated clay,
Dead for all time, alive just for one day! . . ."
You swear: "Death makes you nothing!"

You repeat

His folly, most maliciously, to cheat
Me of existence!—Here's his pistol—now
Use it.

You held it cold against your brow. . . .

I speak aloud here in this empty room
To you: I cannot see you. . . . In your tomb
This day I saw your coffin. . . . I recall
That pistol shot and as I watched you fall,
Your blood came gushing up. . . .

I have gone out,
Gone out into the night. . . . And still you flout
Me with your folly! Some one spoke; and I
Turned; he sat down. . . .

And fluttering from the sky
A bird swooped and those boughs above us stirred:
There came that little puff of wind. . . . I heard
That very sound of someone singing—There!
Wait, you can hear it! . . .

And then that someone spoke:
He sits here opposite me; I hear him croak
While he drones on: "You are animated clay,
Dead for all time, alive just for one day! . . .
Death makes you nothing! . . ."

And far off again
I hear the voice of someone singing. . . .

Rain

Chills the long sinuous ridge of distant hills,
And, as two hundred years ago, it fills
The dark world and my vague dark life with peace,
Here while I pause . . . I who can never cease. . . .

DIRGE.

SLOW, slow across the black bleak range
I see them move, I hear them moan;
Their heavy sorrow knows no change:
It is my own.

Cold, cold the coffin that they bear
Yet darkens all the doleful earth,
Pale with the shadow of her hair,
And her dead mirth.

Death, death shall tarry when no grief
Survives, nor joy, nor any woe;
No wanton hope; no wan belief;
This, all men know.

BACCHANAL.

LET us drink, drink all night long,
Revel, sing, carouse, and dance,
Mingling tale and jest and song;
Not one joy is left to chance.

Let us drink, drink till the morn,
Till the morning burns the sky;
Let us laugh the world to scorn,
Laughing, laughing, you and I.

A NIGHT PIECE.

AS from unnumbered worlds away
I found myself. . . . My drowsy feet
Toil up the hill; the summer heat
Throbs through the vacant city gray.

I pause and listen: all is still—
The rattle of a distant cab
Blurs the pale night—and then, a stab,
An engine whistles, tense and shrill.

And leisurely along the street
A cat comes, mincingly alert,
Some feline roysterer or flirt,
In stealthy languor, smug, discreet!

And like a shrivelled wretch whose numb
Desire defies all sight and sound,
Sprawled drunkenly upon the ground,
The city lies defiant, dumb!

For all this jaded world is mute—
Calm from a lovely sky, stars peep;
But stars and moonshine, they are cheap!
The town lies sullen, dissolute.

I wait—the silence echoes me
 With old pure memories of dead faith
 Revived as in the magic breath
Of an eternal ecstasy!

Then suddenly the darkness wins
 The topmost windows of a flat;
 The wailing of an amorous cat,
A tangle of wrangling larrikins,

And then the swish of running skirts,
 Loud voices, cacklings, pattering hoofs,
 A last quick scurry—and blank roofs
Recall the night, yet nothing hurts.

Till clamouring from a hidden lane
 A throng of women quarrelling breaks
 The silence, and their discord makes
The night, the very sky, profane.

So the world withers. Exquisite
 Balm drifting from some garden near,
 Like half-heard music I half-hear—
They blur and deaden all of it!

A DRINKING SONG.

LET a man drink,
For what can he think
Worthy to sink or worthy to rise—
Seeing the gods are up in the skies!
And seeing the devil has snatched for his prize,
Much of the earth
And most of our mirth,
And all that is worth . . . the lust of your eyes?

And so let us drain
Tankards again,
Flagons amain! . . . Bring 'em all in! . . .
And so we'll endeavour to baffle his sin,
Whose but the devil's—outdoing his din,
And how but by this
Most sweet artifice
Of wine for her kiss—and more wine for his kin?

And so let us drink,
For truly, I think
That the gods wink—when wine is the test!
And surely their laughter and ours is the best,
Theirs in their scorn of us, ours in unrest—
Wine, again wine!
Till we, too, shine
Tranquil . . . divine! . . . completing their jest!

IDEALISM.

YOURSELF most composite,
Chequered with day and night,
What secret thing are you?—

Behold that sky of blue:
All that you hear and see,
You are essentially.

Prismatic from the deep
Vast being of your sleep
The seething populous
World, gaily amorous,
Burns verily with each hue
That emanates from you.

Symbol of what you are,
Reciprocal, that star
Burns with your life, no less
Quick with your consciousness
Than your own vital brain,
Cell, muscle, nerve, and vein.

Your soul is so immense,
Mark how it flashes hence
Creating in its flight
Through space, light, always light!
Yourself disintegrate
You know now every fate.

Man's life is in his art,
Which is no more apart
From him than his flesh is;
It makes the whole earth his,
Creative in each whim
That grieves and pleases him.

That enduring past yet swarms
Out of yourself and forms
The bright world even yet;
The dreams you now forget
Shall be the strange deeds that
All men shall wonder at.

Your changeless will must be
Only eternally
To live, live, and create
Yourself, insatiate,
Desirously diverse,
Careless of boon or curse.

For you in truth desire
Speech only, speech afire,
Most godlike speech which breaks
Like light in you, and makes
Each word, yourself—no less—
Symbol of consciousness.

O fleeting synthesis
Of all that was, and is,
Reflex of earth and star,
Yourself, yourself, you are
The inmost mystery
Of land and sky and sea.

A SONG FOR ROSAMUND,
THE LOMBARD QUEEN.

THERE was a king, a jovial king,
Rode out across the heather—
O he could laugh and he could sing
When we drank deep together!

He had a queen, a winsome queen,
But what were that to you, sir?
I would not say where I have been,
Nor what she bade me do, sir.

There came a night, a bloody night,
From death there is no shrinking—
So let me die while I can fight,
If I may not die drinking!

To her I galloped, galloped back,
By forest, ditch and ramp, sir;
I gave her all that she did lack,
Ere she put out the lamp, sir.

So love, O love, we'll pledge to-night—
And something more I'm thinking. . . .
But let me die while I can fight,
If I may not die drinking!

A BALLAD OF DESIRE.

BEHOLD it was this very night:
Outwearied with the plaintive rain.
I rose, I cast her from my sight—
Who loves, must love in vain.

Her tears were sweet; I did not wince;
More poignant sorrow none could know;
She fled; I have not seen her since;
It was so long ago.

I cast her from me and she fled.
I flung the casements back; the wind
Bespattered her unhappy bed.
God, how my anguish grinned!

Perchance a hundred years have ceased.
The clamorous city laughed out loud;
Upon her flesh they dared to feast:
It was as I had vowed.

A thousand lifeless years are nought—
They hounded her from street to kerb,
From hall to hut, from camp to court,
Sublime, supreme, superb.

My fault it was, O courtesan,
Because I praised your beauty so,
That there was known to every man,
My love, and thus my woe:

Too pure you were for them to guess
Your being; but once known to men
They told your shameful loveliness:
You were a harlot then.

Wherefore I flung her from my sight,
She fled forth wailing and I laughed:
The mob might mouth her piteous plight,
And match with mine their craft.

Behold, it was this very day
The hideous city ravaged her:
How still the black years ebb and sway—
Now she shall never stir.

So long ago they brought her in,
All clattering up the creaking stair—
She was so pale, so frail, so thin;
Dead, and I kissed her hair.

So gentle in her death she seemed,
Not ever more adorable,
Once when with love her hot blood gleamed,
She was so pale, so still.

Most sensual Death!—this then is she—
I know not what my sorrow knows:
My life and these my kisses—see—
Her coffin shall enclose. . . .

And now that years on years have been
Like spindrift hurried gust on gust—
These lustful ages, they have seen
Her most lascivious dust!

AN ELEGY.

I DREDGE my soul for buried memories.
The pomp of perished ages, once divine,
Breaks dawn-like over realms that gleam and shine
Mysterious through dark straggling forest trees.
I dream, and I become the lord of Time;
Life eddies, and afresh
Far billowing years re-echo me sublime—
My sleep is mine to purge me of my flesh.

Pale petal-soft her kisses on my cheek
Once woke me laughing. Sorrow shall not cease
Now, though the vaults of stale regret release
Bleak floods of blind desire, which fain would seek
Oblivion through the palsied night and wait,
Numbed, being freed from life—
Heedless and hopeless, speechless, desolate—
Freed from the dread that goads men into strife.

I pledge my anguish frenzied, having left
Scarce refuse of remorse—for I have known
All her sweet moods of wanton mirth and moan,
All shameless states of godhead, and bereft
Have grovelled starving when dim years in dust
Like shrouded dreams uprose—
Arose, submerging me, and I was thrust
Down hell-ward, shrieking: never night shall close.

Pale petal-soft her kisses once were shed
Warm on my lips, all fragrant with the spring;
And never moments falter by but bring
Back echoes of her laughter: she is dead.
Along dumb shores of darkling misery,
Where gaunt cliffs drip with sweat,
Far in my sleep I seek her zealously—
Far in my dreams I wander, woe-beset.

I dredge my soul for buried memories,
And all the joyous pomp of withered days,
My own, I yield her tribute to her praise;
For all men's sorrow that the whole earth sees
Through age-worn worlds I suffer, knowing this:
That never a hope or sigh
Can waken her—yea, though I feel her kiss—
For she is dead. My grief can never die.

A VIKING'S DEATH.

HIM, wounded, shackled, pricked with spears,
they dragged and goaded through the
town,

Up the soaked hill 'neath dripping boughs, across
steep ditches slipping down;

Him, gagged and gyved, they struck and jarred, and
nudged each other: "Being freed,

How shall he thank us? When we loose these leathern
thongs he shall not bleed!"

Through the wet night they trudged; at length they
halted; far away the surge

Moaned, muffled through the mist. They watched the
night ebb and the dawn emerge;

Then many came: "Is he, then, all the glory of that
great sea-fight?"

"This is their chief," one said; "the rest sank or were
slain, for none took flight."

One cried: "With us these pirates strove: their one
ship 'mid our galleys lay.

Hour after bloody hour, our men they stabbed and
slew through that long fray.

This victim, for our vengeance, God has yielded to us.
See him here—

Praise to the saints! Let him be soothed with horror,
torture, death, and fear!"

Naked, they kicked him from the ground to where,
 abrupt, a jagged pit
Sank from the green grass and green trees, and thrust
 and flung him into it.
With ready swords and bows alert they stood; one,
 reaching downward, cut
With a long lance his gag and bonds. They watched
 his stiff mouth gape and shut.

The red, round sun burnt up the mist; day from the
 dripping night uprose.
At them he blinked; at him they leered, and watched
 his fingers stretch and close.
“Where are thy weapons? Lost!” they jeered.
 “Where is thy life? Dost call it such?
How fares thy hope? ’Twill be our joy! Our one
 gift wilt thou deign to touch?”

Thereat they scoffed, and over him untrapped a cage
 of vipers warmed
With fire to fury, which on him fell writhing—up his
 legs they swarmed;
And he at those cruel faces close around above him
 upward glared:
“Lean down your craven necks!” he cried, “to ask this
 boon I had not dared!

“As on black torrents of sore woe let my life ebb—my death behold!

Let these fangs pierce me, ye shall hear but my derision, as of old.

Do ye not dread to breathe this air envenomed? Nay, these would not heed

Such carrion as yourselves; but me? My good blood they would suck indeed!

“Lean close. My death shall vanquish you! Do I not triumph even now?

Gaze on the earth, the sky, the sun; now look upon my steadfast brow!

Ye shall remember this my death—sky, sun, and earth shall echo it,

And all the years you each shall know, mark how I tread them in this pit!

“I die as gladly as I lived! This valiant night, in Odin’s hall,

In proud Valhalla I shall drink and banquet with the gods, who all

Shall hearken to this triumph when from your nocturnal terror, I,

Inebriate from the earth, recount the bliss I feel now as I die!

“Last night we sang to your black priests a mass of
running blood. Ashore
Last month with us ye ate the flesh of stallions offered
up to Thor;
Meek vassals then, ye renegades, filched your poor
meed of courage thus—
The haughty gods, in merry pride, resenting this, made
sport of us.

“For, gaily from our northern realms, as 'twere for a
brief cruise, we sailed
To take your tribute, and we spied, tense in the bay,
your far fleet, veiled
Deep in the ocean mist. We knew then how ye
thought that treachery
Could, with your numbers, swamp our strength. We
flashed toward you through the sea!

“My one ship with your many strove. The gods, in
giving men the earth,
Said, ‘Ye shall strive and laugh and die!’ Shall we
lie snug in creek and firth
When there are lands to find and quell? The world
stores up its wealth—’tis ours!
And we ransack your lands for it when we have burnt
your huts and towers!

“Lean down and mark how I exult now in my proud,
unflinching end.

Your oarsmen lashed with iron and lead bled not as
ye bled, slain and penned

Thick on your red decks, burnt anon to show your
many sails in flight—

Our swords snapped; with their butts we stabbed and
slew your hosts till noon was night.

“Our one ship, too, flamed high. The huge white
billows plunged and reared and sank!

My comrades all were drowned or killed. Half-dead,
I swam, I seized a plank—

I grasped a ship and clambered up, and struck one
down, and snatched his sword,

While limply to the helm I clung and many a skull I
split and gored.

“Lean down—stare at me—keep my scorn! So, at
the last, the steep deck tipped

Up from the slanting seas, and you all tottered down on
me—I slipped.

Victorious then, your stifling bulk held me, who,
crippled, singly fought

Against your onrush. Me you bound, and now, behold!
you are my sport!

“These serpents numb me; yet no less still in my death
I vanquish you.
My kinsmen shall avenge me, yet my curse shall taint
your horror too—
Still must I smile, as if to prove my happy gods out-
glory yours
Here while I lapse from this joy now to that to which
my being soars!

“See how I pluck them from the ground, and how their
sharp fangs pierce my skin!
My limbs swell with their venom. Laugh—laugh with
me! Pale from brow to chin,
You hang like wintry clouds because, like strife to us—
a daily need—
Fear is to you the piteous grief that shivers in your
mawkish creed!”

At his loud scorn they flinched and stirred, and as the
east ere dawn lies pale,
Then flushes slowly, gradually their grim unrest black
like a gale
Burst red with rage tempestuous; they spat upon him,
and their teeth
Frothed, their eyes flamed, and they hurled down sand,
stones, and bark, and clutched-up heath.

Hard by a crumbling hovel lay; they gathered rafters,
shingles, thatch,
Tore down the long, dry sapling fence. They yelled:
"Perchance our fire shall hatch
Some terror in you; we shall see!" And lighted straw
and embers red
They rained upon him. He stood still. Blood
trickled from his cheeks and head.

They dragged and rolled down logs and trunks till all
the pit was deep in fuel,
Whereon he climbed, and he stood mute. He
gazed up at their faces cruel,
Fixed, fierce, and pale. They clustered round. With
sickening dread on him their eyes
Were dull and strained; and round his feet he felt the
warm smoke wreath and rise.

He smiled. The stealthy fire drew near, and licked
his feet, and crackled loud.
He cried: "I thank the gods for this—that, being dead,
my body proud
Shall not be humbled, spurned, or hung to poison earth
with, and the sky,
For in this smoke, up through the blue, I mount to
Asgard, even I!

“Now shall I know the pangs of Thor when to Him-
self, Himself, nine days
Hung on the vast Ygdrasil tree! From shameful sick-
beds ye shall gaze
On fearful death, shut ever off from hope of bright
Valhalla thus—
War is the fruit of life, the joy of valour keen, im-
petuous.

“I choke—lean forward!—my feet burn! My fingers
splutter, nipped and charred;
Yet oft through wintry darkness we no less have
sweated, labouring hard
Through ice and blizzard, warmed in sooth by tales
resung of old wars won
In the clash of armour, shaft, and sword. My speech
comes thick—my life is done!

“Yet ye, my slaves, remember this: that this last rite
ye render me
My gods have prompted, and this pyre, to signalize my
victory!”
Anon he shouted: “Odin, yea! Now with my last
words unto Thee
I yield my life! Clear through the smoke I see Thee
—but they cannot see.”

A sudden gust revealed him black there through the
hungry flames erect;
Then he was covered. They fell back. One
shrieked: "His god came to protect
Him, for I saw Him!" and a shout burst from that
furnace, "I am dead!—
I died victorious, and I live!" They saw the clouds
part overhead.

All hushed, they shrank back in the wood, together
huddled, pallid, mute.
The far surge moaned; the sun, behind dense fields of
cloud-rack dissolute,
Failed from their vision, and they fled; and night came
through the smoke and haze,
And drifted through the silence till up the glad dawn
rose, all ablaze.

THE KING OF SARDIS.

K NOW this: that through all time past Love has
been
So sweet that none could perish and not live
Forthwith again.

Ere Persia from the East
Burst, whelming earth with empire—while, subdued
By swarthy alien chiefs, whose martial pomp
Outbraved her foes, proud Egypt drowsed in peace,
Half-dreaming of her ancient wisdom still—
While, yet unwearied, from her mighty past,
Assyria stirred, and crushed as with a stroke
The realms around her, and imperial Tyre
Fell at her touch; while they who had begotten
Rome were a tribe yet; while the world was thus
Elate, as now, with battling nations—One,
Hard by the western confines near the clear
Light of all Greece divine, a shoreless land,
Green over vine-clad hills and fertile heights,
Lay Sardis merry with two meeting worlds—
Lay Sardis vibrant with bewildering tongues
And diverse customs, where all peoples met
In commerce and in pleasure, in the flash
Of crimson, blue, and saffron, to the sound
Of never-flagging lutes and flutes, which piped
Perpetually of all the world's desires,
And all the gladness of men's mortal lives.

Candaules spoke: "Gyges, my words are truth,
Else were I faithless, though she be my wife.
Since I am king, my strength and prowess are known—
Descent from Hercules accounts me great;
Wherefore my kingly merit proves that she
Excels all sweetness ever woman showed—
Else had a thousand concubines been mine
To flout her imperfections to her face,
If she were not all that consummate love
Fulfil for my desire!
"Yet would I prove
Not by my speech, but by herself. My voice
Less than her fragrance must profane her—yes,
And mock her with the vanity of words.
My care is in thy doubt—that maddens me!
Therefore thou shalt behold her—not her mere
Swathed shape, the rich, royal garments that she wears,
Her gem-spun silk and regal raiment—no!
Nor merely see her once unveiled; but this:
As with my sight survey her chastity,
Yet chaster still to thee, beyond the moon
More distant by her sovereignty and mine.
This night thou shalt behold her naked!"

He

Turned then to Gyges, who stept back, and, pale,
Shook as with fear, and could not speak. At length:
"O king, unto thy gracious will not now
Dare I be bent! Nay, sire, it is not meet
That I should venture thus—'twould sully her.

Nor is this lawful, though thou be the king,
And I in all things as thou wilt, my lord.
Thy words possess me. Truly, all thou hast
Told I believe: that she is fairer far
Than any woman that has ever lived.
Moreover, if I saw her that would soil
Thee also, sire—and vengeance would be just! . . .
Sire, I confess this—that I love her now,
For I have heard her voice. To see her face
Will madden me. Sire, if I see yet more,
May the gods pity me and help me then!"

Candaules answered: "Thou shalt see her—she
Yet shall know nothing. I myself will hide thee.
I do not seek to test thy constancy,
Nor match myself, heroic by my birth,
Against thee whom I cherish. Pity me!
Let this thought soften thee; think how I gaze
On her perfection, marvelling at her, I,
Alone, as in a wilderness of love!"

Said Gyges; "Thou art king; thou art my lord.
To do this thing is needless. She is all
Thou sayest—acquit me!"

But Candaules cried:
"This night thou seest the loveliest woman, thou!
No word can turn or change me. Thou shalt see
Her!—and, remember, rage and friendship both

Alike achieve my choice, and thou must act
As I've resolved, most fortunate!—for thou
Shalt see her, see her naked self this night!"

Candaules strode forth, frowning; Gyges knelt.
From the huge carven hall, past prostrate slaves,
The king went; and, beneath the dazzling blue,
His escort gleamed and jangled as they rode
Across the rushing Pactolus, whose banks
Were grey with sheepskins, tethered for the gold
That flew by in the waters from the far
Green mountains rich and ruddy with ripe fruit.

He in his chariot, through the tangled streets,
Sped from the city, past the sculptured shapes
Which loomed along the road—of heroes, gods,
And tales portrayed of his royal dynasty—
Of wars victorious, and of captured kings,
And damsels, slaves, and all the happy wealth
That men in their mortality desire.

That night Candaules whispered, "Art thou there?
Dismiss the guard!" And led him secretly
Along hushed, darkened, empty corridors,
And paused outside his chamber, and he spoke:
"Here thou shalt enter. Thou shalt see her there
Disrobe herself—she will not once suspect.
Look on her and retire—mark well; and I
Shall know what thou dost think of beauty then."

And weakly Gyges stuttered: "Ere too late,
Give heed to this. Sire, I have seen her eyes;
I have seen her body's movements, and have heard
Her speak. O, gracious king, it is too much!
This I aver, at least, that even now
I thrill and tingle with a speechless love
For her, O king! This folly were my doom!
To see her thus will damn me with desires
Forever helpless. Rather strike me down
Dead at thy feet!"

Candaules said, "Thou shalt
Now judge her loveliness." And Gyges cried:
"Sire, I were shamed, though but a herdsman born,
If even a man beheld me nude. O, king,
As into swamps of treason I am thrust,
My very eyes must prostitute thy wife!
Sire, thou didst raise me once, and wilt thou now
Thus humble me, and shame thyself and her?"

The king made answer: "Gyges, thou dost know
How she conceals herself, for none have seen,
Save I, her face since she was wed, as is
The stringent custom of her folk. Thou knowest
My thought is half Hellenic. I would gaze
All day upon her naked beauty here,
Endeavouring thus to comprehend the joy
Within her! Yea, 'tis torture, daily woe,
For me to watch her, and to think that none

Save I may thus behold her.

“If I failed
To share this gladness, then my niggardly
Will would betray me, and would sting itself—
A frenzied scorpion—for a joy unshared
Is venom. Thou shalt see her. Tarry here.”

And Gyges waited. Through the curtains he
Scanned the broad room. The polished silver set
Round the high, carven walls reflected clear
Stark from bright, chequered carpets and tiled floor,
Voluted columns, and the marble frieze
Portrayed with huntsmen, warriors, slaves, and priests,
And tales of antique wisdom, gods, and men,
And all the retinues of peace and war.

Anon she came. He gazed as slowly she
Unveiled and showed the glory of her face;
Untwisted her thick hair, and lazily
Released her jewelled belt and silken robes;
Let fall her purple tunic webbed with gold,
Till, naked in his sight, she stood and paused. . . .

Candaules there heard not a sound; but she,
Mayhap, was modest, that she saw herself,
Whose eyes that day had looked on ready men,
Or felt some violation in the air. . . .
She did not speak—she did not sleep that night.

Dawn broke; the noon glared; and at length the dusk
Fell, faint with roses, drowsy with the spring;
And Gyges, thrilled with rapture, that recalled
The night, felt in his flesh a feverish joy
That wantoned through his blood inebriate,
Sick with surpassing grief, whose ecstasy
Beyond all hope burned, tantalizing him.

A eunuch stept before him, bowed, and crouched
Prone on the ground, and murmured: "From the queen,
This message, lord; that thou dost come to her
Forthwith. She charges me conduct thee thither."
And Gyges saw the king, who smiled at him,
And he bowed low beneath the sculptured porch;
Then down the long white galleries walked apace,
Behind the lithe form of the stealthy slave,
Until he stood before her; and she spoke,
And he looked up, and saw they were alone,
Save for three jetty eunuchs, whose oiled thews,
It seemed, were flickering from the darkness where
Each at a doorway held his post as guard.

Approaching Gyges mournfully she sighed:
"Too well I know my sorrow. Barely yet
Can I be nerved to speech.

"I know not how
He has seduced thee—by what wiles he made
Thee blemish thus my honour; that is past.
Thou shalt repair in part his treachery—

Thou canst be slain!"

And Gyges, being mute,
She drew so near him quickly that the air
Flushed, trembling with her presence; adding then,
Impassive: "Die thou shalt, if thou dost fear
What all men crave for—power, and wealth, and love.
And if thou hast contempt for life, then die!
Do thus or thus. 'Tis thou who shalt decide—
Be slain or slay him who dishonoured me!
I offer thee life and my love—or death!
I offer thee this kingdom and myself,
Or thou shalt perish—yea, this moment, now!"

Awe-struck, he could not speak.

Implacably,
"Slay or be slain," she said, "thou hast thy choice."
And he replied, "Thy mercy, I beseech,
Queen, for myself and him. . . . The evil done
Was love-inspired—nay, had his love not been
So measureless, perchance, he might have scorned
Thee, whom to view can be but to desire,
Love, and revere! Nay, pardon us, O Queen!"

Unmoved, she answered, "Thou shalt die, or kill
Him who defamed me. You two shared last night,
With your adulterous vision, myself disrobed.
One may survive; one dies to bring me back
My chastity. His fault gives thee the choice."
He pondered, and at length looked up. His voice

Was heavy with the horror of the dead—
Articulate, yet sanguine, though forlorn:
“Death were as nothing if men did not love;
But men who love lose more than life by death.

“Queen, since I love thee, I, who oft have braved
The clash of battle in the foremost ranks
At gallop through great walls of avid spears,
Can tremble now—and, queen, I cannot die!”

Then at her feet: “I pray thy clemency.
He is my benefactor and my king,
Whom I would serve and honour. Spare him, queen!”

And she, aloof, again rejoined: “One dies,
For, while you both live, my sweet fame lies dead,
And I myself am sick, yea, stricken down,
Till I regain my virtue which he filched!”

And then, erect, he seized her hands and cried:
“He shall be slain! Who dies unwittingly
Knows not he does not live.”

Then, at a sign,
Her guard stept forth and led him from the room.

He strove within himself, yet knew full well
That one was doomed. His honour and his love
Filled, thrilled, and shamed him—flames of pain and
joy;

For on his buoyant passion all joy was
His love from all the boundaries of the world;
The very light that round herself shone clear
Caught his life upward to her; and, beside,
All earth was as a dream for him to scorn—
Till once again his old thoughts held him fast.

She was remorseless. His love made him weak;
Nor could he wake the king and tell him all.
A sudden stab had surely quenched his voice,
Or else the wrathful king had haled him out,
And flayed him in the public view as one—
An impious churl—who dared to rape the throne.

At midnight, dark, behind the curtains, where
One night before he stood, again he stood.
The dagger given him itched in his grasp.
The huge, black, stealthy eunuchs seemed to mock
His fate—prepared to shape him to her will
With his death if 'twere needed; and himself,
He seemed but as a petty puppet, placed
To raise the scorn of the derisive gods,
And the cold blade seemed thirsty for his blood—
His own—who watched there till the king should sleep.
He watched the moon that fled through realms of
night,
And the clouds that struggled over restless skies;
And heard nought but the whisperings of his fear,
And knew nought save his passion and his dread;

Till the faint moonlight struck the columns white,
And, flashing from the silver mirrors, fell
Like death, unpitying, on the sleeping king—
Oblivious to the wealth of all that land,
And dead to those barbaric joys recalled
Of glad processions and wild festivals,
Of damsels, warriors, huntsmen, and the whole
Pomp of his perished life and royal estate.

Gyges crept forth and stood beside his bed;
He stooped, perchance, as though to kiss the king;
He saw her hair dark on the pillow strewn,
And watched her bosom stirring as she breathed—
And felt his fingers itch to slay himself.

He caught the rapture of her piercing glance,
And in the raging conflict of desire,
Love, and remorse, he swayed.

He felt her breath
Burn through him; and his whole life fell away
Effete, contemptible.

He plucked aside
The damask, thrust his arm down, and his arm
Was strong, unflinching. Then he lifted up
The dripping dagger that proclaimed him king!

PROMETHEAN.

GOD dreaming in his star-enshrouded sky
Bethought himself of me, so even I
Who was till then as nothing, leapt to life—
How rude a structure first, what subtle knife
Wielded by how magnificent a touch
Has moulded me to what I am—as much
As centuries on centuries were piled
While I, with panting steps each day beguiled
From gas to earth, from earth to life, became
A pulsing embryo and there the flame
Of sense burst in me, hushed, ineffable.

God dreamed of me, say I? I cannot tell.
Suppose this were so, surely then a dream
Which were as vacancy, which would beseem
No God that I shall bow to Let me peer
Into the soul of earth and view more near
This burning nakedness my perjured praise
Trembles to think about and on the ways
My breath is tribute to—gaunt legs and arms,
Spine rounded in a head, these dubious charms,
Since man's, may suit the flesh-born here—but me?
Nay, surely not—not that my hope can be
Much mightier than my baseness whence upsprings
The futile hankering which gives me wings
Fashioned to fall to dust; God took no thought

To fashion me, or had I thus been wrought?—
And He is this one pregnant universe,
Vapor at first till sun became averse
And beacons into power—thus grew the earth
And all the laboring constellations' dearth;
And I myself, at length, a cold light gleamed:
God dreamed perchance but knew not that he dreamed.

I live and when I perish I shall be
Unconscious of death's fell indignity;
This bears one consolation and again
To know that being less than baseness then
I shall be more than now in all I wish
Or all I cherished with my feverish
And rebel longing tamed. Well, let that be:
At least it took all time to fashion me!

Half I have thought that love would prove divine
Assurance that I sought and God would shine
Straightway in heaven before my dazzled eyes;
Half I have thought the faith which fortifies
The soul to joy and strength would give at length
Me power to speak, and therefore greater strength
So that my conjured faith would there arouse
The God that I had longed for! Life endows
—Weak, abject fool—no greater end than this,
To feel when hot in blood the bitter bliss
Breathed from the mouth that feeds a hungry heart,
To feel anon the glory and the smart

Of warring wills, to know how life is sore
With dread of paralytic death before
Where lies the blank ere life was ours.—My soul
Yet be assured of this—that I control
Within my power my wants since I desire
All that shall be to happen and require
No less the pain that agonises me
Than love's hot rapture; and though I may not flee
From death still death has been my choice and I
Shall surely sometime only seek to die;
And till I perish all my fear herein
Is sunk, for death is baser than all sin.
Alive, we dream of death uncomforted:
I hope we'll dream we're living when we're dead!

Lay not our destiny within God's power?
Since He alone existed could His dower
Fail in the slightest? Is not He supreme
(Because alone existing) though He seem
Unto our purblind sight as visionless?
Creator, can He lack our consciousness?
It matters not. Creator though He be
Conscious or mute and senseless, unto me
All hope is futile and all the ends of man
Apart from me as ere the world began.
What dross is this dull universe to make
Its noblest work gross man, him who can slake
His love but in his lust, who only lives
Until his hunger languishes, who gives

Thought only for himself and those he loves,
Who are his panderers, who only moves
Reeking with doubt long troubled from his birth
So to his death, fit creature of this earth.

And I myself am thus, indifferent
Rotting each moment, till my strength is spent
Decreed to life the dupe of every fate
And careless equally of every state;
Who laugh when laugh I must, who toil or mourn
When the need stirs within and I shall turn
Resigned at length to death and fill the sum
Of life and go whence all the world has come.
And you believe?—Well, I have only yearned
For fortitude of faith—and God has earned
A curse or two beside much blasphemy
With words that fell beneath my fury's plea
And my hot rage beneath my hate's desire!
Yea, if the world is senseless my dim fire,
My thought and will, is greater, though such shape
As the stale earth determines, though escape
Is futile still—nay, can I ever strive
For though my life is loathed, I stay alive?
Yet this I know, that hate is mine for I
Welcome what ill betide me when thereby
This idiot-fashioning of my flesh is shown
The folly of my scorn for I drop down
Even to hell, to worse than hell, to death,
Void endless death, unmeaning, utter death. . . .

And diffidence transmutes all I believe
To weakling grief—then how can life retrieve
My body's flame of soul? You with brow
Worn with long years of grubbing study, now
You of the cleric garb, you say you know;
So one belies the other; which?—Although
All men who ponder mock me, I from hell
Have won my creed from silence; all is well.
If God has light, if He can see and feel,
How paltry in his might that He reveal
Such want of art in making man! If God
Is space and vapour, animal and clod,
Plain, mountain, star and ocean, **striving, still**
Unconscious, aimless, void of thought or will—
Be of the two whichever one, I smile
Sure victor either way—I have this guile
If He be conscious that I wreck this plan
Contemning earth and flesh, though but a man;
Or if He is but earth, as I opine,
He is less than I: I think the laugh is mine.

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